

T H E
FINE LADY
A N O V E L

By the AUTHOR of Miss MELMOTH.

“ It is the first Part of Virtue to strengthen the Mind against
“ the Attacks of Vice, and secure all the Avenues by which
“ it might make its Approaches.”

In TWO VOLUMES.

V O L. II.



L O N D O N:
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THE
FINE LADY

A NOVEL

By the Author of Mrs. Melmoth
By the Author of Mrs. Melmoth

It is the story of a woman who, after the blind again
to the Author of Mrs. Melmoth, which
it is the story of a woman who, after the blind again



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MDCCCXXII

The Fine Lady.

LETTER XXXII.

To GEORGE LENOX, *Esq*;

Woodley-Park, June 30.

MY dear George, accept my sincere congratulations on the opening prospect of your happiness. You, who know my heart, can only know the excess of joy your last letter gave me.—Your lovely amiable Fanny will soon be yours. No wonder your passion for her increases: She well deserves it should. You will now be

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B

enabled

enabled to look back on the past troubles of your life as a troublesome dream, from which you have waked to real happiness.

Were I not determined to give up my soul to hope, I might have some reason perhaps for anxiety ; but my charming Harriet has assured me in such strong terms that she will be mine at the appointed time, that the knowledge of Lord Hilton's being near us gives me scarce any uneasiness. I am interrupted.——

July, 1st.

I am now convinced of what was only a surmise before : Louisa is undoubtedly deeply in love,—but with whom I am yet ignorant. I might indeed have made myself acquainted with the object, but the agony into which my attempt threw her, restrained my impetuous curiosity.

She

She has very much of late avoided company. — This morning I wandered into the garden just after breakfast, — in rather a melancholy mood; Miss Denby and I had had a trifling dispute. I was not just at that time in a disposition to sacrifice my opinion and reason to, what appeared, her caprice; and she retired to her chamber extremely stately. I was sensibly piqued at her behaviour, and was determined to make no advances just then; but, as Monimia says, I found “resentment ebb, and love flow in apace;” and I was returning to seek her, when I discovered Louisa in a summer-house. I entered it immediately. In her company I always find a relief from any little anxiety. I found her in tears. — I eagerly sought the cause. “Perhaps, I should blush,” said she, with a gentle smile, “were I to tell you this book has occasioned my tears.” Saying which, she pre-

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presented me with the Hermit of Warkworth. She made some very pretty remarks on that poem, to apologize, she said, for the effect the perusal had on her. Turning over the pages I came to these lines, which I read out to her:

Lord Piercy pleaded for his friend,
Her father too consents;

None but the beauteous maid herself
His wishes now prevents:

But she with studied fond delays
Defers the blissful hour;
And loves to try his constancy,
And prove her maiden power.

"That heart," she said, "is lightly priz'd

"Which is too lightly won;

"And long shall rue that easy maid,

"Who yields her love too soon."

The lines seemed applicable to Harriet. I asked Miss Somerville if these

those were *her* sentiments? She made me such an answer, that I would have given five thousand pounds had proceeded from the lips of Miss Denby. I could not help fixing my eyes tenderly upon her, and saying with a sigh, "O Louisa! that my Harriet had your sensibility, or that I was not thus enslaved by her charms!" I thought she never appeared so amiable as she did at this moment; her confusion and pity for me was at once blended in her countenance. She turned from me, and withdrew her hand, which I had pressed to my lips—to wipe away a starting tear. In pulling out her handkerchief she dropped something: she seemed too much engaged to attend to the incident; I stooped and picked up a small shagrin case.

"Now, Miss Somerville," cried I,
"I have it in my power to confer an
B 3 "obligation

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“obligation on you; but first I must
“satisfy my own curiosity.”

“In what, Sir?”

“By knowing for whom it is you have
“sighed so long. Shall I open this case,
“and give liberty to the prisoner?”

The power of speech seemed to be taken from her: She clasped her hands together, her face pale as ashes.—At last; “If ever—if ever pity moved
“your breast, return it, return it to
“me. Make me not the most wretched
“of mortals by opening that fatal case;
“yet, if you should still persist—O
“Montague!”—I absolutely believe, if I had not given her the picture immediately (for such certainly it was) she would have fainted. I pressed her to my bosom, and drew her to the seat. It was some time before she quite recovered herself. Faith! George, I do not know very well how to account for it, but I never felt so exalted a friendship for any
woman;

woman : but I am sure, while I clasped her in my arms, and pressed her cold cheek, I hardly thought there was such a person as Miss Denby in the world.

What the devil can that case contain, the discovery of which could throw her into such agonies? I would give half my estate to know :—but the secret is impenetrable. The remainder of this day I have seen but little of her. At dinner when we met, she scarce raised her eyes. A conscious melancholy sat on her lovely features. Amiable Louisa! Would I could see you happy!

But, in my pity for this suffering, yet uncomplaining excellence, let me not forget my love for Harriet. I wish to break her of her capricious childishness. If I for ever give way to her sudden starts of anger, and really let her perceive the uneasiness they give me, I doubt she will but too frequently avail her-

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self of her power, and render both our lives unhappy.

I could not bear to see a cloud of discontent on her brow, and know that she thought I was chiefly the occasion of it; I therefore endeavoured to make my peace with her: but, though I laboured hard to be reconciled, she would not bate an ace of her assumed dignity, but kept it up most amazingly. She would make distinctions: I told her I thought we were equally in fault, and that I paid a compliment to her sex and superiority by making the first concession; but no; she would, on my acknowledging my offence, pardon me, which was all the favour I should obtain from her. I then told her laughing, I was in a humour to be pleased with her at present; as I hoped it would be the last dispute we should have on this side matrimony, I would submit to what she thought proper; but that I hoped like

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likewise, when ~~she~~ was my wife, she would remember her part of the ceremony, if she expected I should pay any regard to mine.

We were not, however, very good company the whole evening. I could not abstract my ideas intirely from the garden-adventure; indeed they continually revert to it. The mystery is very great!

Is it not a little particular, that, so many months as these two young ladies have resided together, there should be so little intimacy between them? To me it is astonishing. It is true, friendship, like love, should be centered in one object; yet we may feel a degree of it for a person with whom one lives, so as to place some confidence in them; or those two most noble sentiments of the human breast, would rather contract than expand the

B 5

heart.

heart. But between Miss Denby and Miss Somerville there is great politeness without the least shew of affection. They are to be sure of very different opinions.

——I wish they were not! I must be content however; the die is cast.

I long to know how your uncle will behave to Miss Neville; tho', thank Heaven! his behaviour will now be of little consequence to you, as to your real happiness I mean; for tho' the acquisition of his estate by and bye,—or rather the resumption of your own, (for I must still think he holds it unjustly from you) will be a great addition, yet I am certain you will taste the utmost felicity in being united to her; and find, in the interest of ten thousand pounds, enough to insure it.

The delicate ingenuoufness of your amiable Fanny is, I think, without example. Custom indeed, arbitrary custom forbids the fair-one to reveal the feelings

THE FINE LADY. II

feelings of her soul; for tho' the poet says, "A maid unasked may own a "well-placed flame," yet few I believe would run the hazard, or perhaps succeed—slaves as we are to custom—in the attempt.

But your noble-minded girl yielded to the soft mandates of her innocent heart; but was not that heart fixed on the most amiable of men? Yes, Lenox, I repeat the most amiable of men:—Think then what happiness I feel when I tell myself you are my friend, and that I know, of all men none is so dear to you as

HENRY MONTAGUE.

B 6 LETTER

LETTER XXXIII.

To Miss HERBERT.

Woodley-Park, July 1.

O My Emily! how fallen, how very fallen, in her own eyes is your poor Louisa!—In her own eyes! My God! Am I not despicable in his? You too, you, my Emily, I fear will blame me. Ah! was I not wretched enough before?—Yet had I a thousand extenuating excuses then, which now, now I have entirely lost. O that I could hide myself from his view for ever! That he might know no more of my distress or me. Yes, Emily! I fear he knows my unhappy passion, and must he not despise me?

If my flowing eyes will permit me, I will tell you all; make a sad confession of my folly, and lay myself open to
your

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your rebuke. Be gentle, however, Emily.—Yet, if I thought your heavy displeasure would sink me to the grave, with rapture would I court destruction. Pardon my expressions, Emily; I know they are too violent for the delicacy of my nature—but I am strangely altered, Emily! you would not know your Louisa.

You remember, my love, your desire that I would give you a description of this too amiable man. Ah! what serene happy times were those!—In order to execute my task with greater exactitude, I took his miniature from Miss Denby's watch. A close examination of the picture created in me a desire to try my pencils. You know I used sometimes to draw, tho' I never attempted taking likenesses. I could not resist the impulse, or rather I found too much pleasure in indulging the impulse. Every day I devoted some time to my fatal employ; for, like Apelles, I grew enamoured

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amoured of the face I was copying. Yet still, it only appeared to me that I admired the picture because it was really beautiful. Ignorant of the passion, I knew not what name to give to the new emotions which filled my soul.

When I had finished the pernicious work, I wanted to have it set, in order to preserve it, and send it to you; for indeed, my dear, I had effectually cheated myself into the persuasion that it was for you I was thus employing my hours.

I went one morning into the city to get it set properly, as I did not choose to employ any one in our part of the town for obvious reasons: the hesitation, which accompanied my orders gave the first intimation that I was doing wrong; but it was now too late to recede, even if I could have formed so cruel a resolution, as it would have appeared to me, to destroy it. Yet still the present was for you. Knowing the day it would
be

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be finished, I took another ride into the city, and possessed myself of the most valuable of prizes to me. This was two days before the nearly so fatal adventure at Vauxhall, which discovered to me the real state of my heart, and has left me miserable ever since. Conscious now of my true motive for drawing the picture, I could not send it to you—I could not part with it. The contemplation of those features was now the only consoling pleasure I could, or wished to taste.

I never mentioned my design to you, from a desire of agreeably surprizing you, and now I carefully concealed this only secret from you. It was a precious little hoard, which, like a miser, I treasured up in secret, nor would trust to the bosom of any one. How many times in the day have I visited my sacred repository, and dropped a tear on the finest face in the world !

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I never carried it about me till yesterday.—Sure fate was busy for my ruin, and urged me to take it into the garden to the alcove. I had a book with me, which, tho' I am a great admirer of its beauties, and have read it with delight, was not then the subject of my contemplation; I had just returned the object of my study to my pocket as I thought, when Mr. Montague appeared. He found I had been in tears, which I disingenuously attributed to having just perused the Hermit of Warkworth. He was melancholy, having but a little before parted from Miss Denby with some displeasure on both sides. We talked of the book; in short, I hardly knew what I talked of. He behaved to me with so much tenderness as almost deprived me of reflection. He kissed and pressed my hand several times; and with confusion I own it, I received but too much satisfaction from the appearances

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ances of an affection which nothing could authorize. He wished Harriet was like me, or that he was not a slave to her charms. O Emily! I thought I never lived till then.

After some time when our conversation had taken a more tender turn, a trickling tear demanded my handkerchief, in pulling which out, I suppose I unhappily drew out the fatal picture, inclosed in a shagrin case.—Mr. Montague picked it up unperceived by me.—He seemed in the very act of opening it, when I saw it in his hands.—He said something, of which I was hardly sensible. Instant distraction seized me.—I hardly knew what became of me, or what, in my agony, I said or did. He was extremely alarmed, and giving me the case unopened, caught me in his arms. My senses were so far gone, that the possession of the fatal occasion of my disorder was scarcely sufficient to restore
me

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me immediately. But tho' I could not find words to thank him, for restoring the picture to me, without satisfying his curiosity, I was not insensible of his attention to me. Indeed I believe that very attention contributed to deprive me of the power of utterance. I blush while I repeat to you his behaviour to me. He clasped me close to his bosom, pressing my lips and cheeks with seeming rapture every instant: called me his lovely Louisa!—Great God! at that instant, softened as I had been by terror, and now soothed by tender looks, pressures and words, how glorious did my mother's memory appear to me! O! thou most excellent of women, thought I, how infinite must have been thy virtue, that could resist a man loving and beloved! Ah! may thy sacred lessons ever be before my eyes!—may I never lose sight of thy excellencies, but strive to emulate them!—I could not avoid
this

this silent apostrophe to the blessed shade of my angel-mother. I withdrew myself from his embrace, and in a voice hardly articulate, thanked him for his kind consideration. He was not urgent to know the contents of the case, which tortures my soul with fears that he did view his image there. But were not my own actions too plainly discoverable?— They were, they were, and I must be undone.

Emily ! I must, I must fly to you. Will you receive me ? I cannot stay here when *he* is gone. He once hinted, as if to compleat his happiness, he should intreat me to accompany his wife to Belle-font. Sooner would I visit the tomb of my ancestors, and consign my wretched body to perish in its close-shut walls.

O what a day was yesterday ! How did my conscious eyes dread to meet his !
never

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never did I truly know distress till
now !

* * *

I have given a small relief to my heart
by unburthening part of its afflictions to
you. Ah ! my Emily ! how sincerely I
wish you were here ! You would I am
sure pity me ; and by telling me so,
alleviate the load of distress which yet
I fear is in store for your unhappy

LOUISA SOMERVILLE.

LETTER XXXIV.

To GEORGE LENOX, Esq;

Woodley-Park, July 3.

I AM just returned from the assembly;
and though the hour and season re-
quire rest, yet my mind is at present too
disturbed to admit so salutary a visitor.

Yesterday

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Yesterday we all were at the races; at night dressed and went to the ball. Miss Denby made it a kind of favour to dance with me. I was piqued at her unseasonable reserve, and informed her of my sentiments on the occasion. However, what I said seemed to have very little effect on her.

I was the more provoked and mortified with the indifference of her behaviour, because she conducted herself very improperly towards Lord Hilton; who has been here frequently. Upon my saying, "a stranger would suppose his Lordship to be the most favoured man of the two;" she sharply replied, "Am I not to be civil to any man but yourself?"

"Yes, my dearest creature! you may, and I wish you to be civil to all, and tender to me."

"And so I must dance with you upon every occasion?"

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“Till we are married, I should hope
“you would have no objection : after-
“wards, you know you cannot. But if
“you did not dance with me, why
“would you choose to dance with Lord
“Hilton? Let me introduce a partner
“to you.”

“No; if I am not to choose for my-
“self, you shall be the man.” I thought
there was something rather singular in
her speech, but was prevented desiring
an explanation at the time, and I thought
no more of it afterwards.

To-day we went through the same
round. At night I looked on myself as
engaged to Harriet. I left her when
we entered the room, and was chatting
with Somerville and some other gentle-
men. The music began, and I saw pre-
parations making amongst the ladies for
dancing, such as drawing up their facks,
&c. I looked for Harriet; she was
talking with Hilton, who was playing
with

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with her fan. I went up to them, making a slight bow to him, which he returned in the same manner and walked off.

“ Have you chose your place, Miss Denby?” asked I, taking out my gloves.

“ Yes, Mr. Montague, and my partner too.”

“ Well, then we have only to begin.”

“ I shall not dance with you.”

“ Not dance with *me* !”

“ No ; I told you this morning I would not. I have no idea of making one’s self so particular. Because we are to be married, I can neither dance, or walk, or ride, or stay at home, but you must be eternally annexed to my train.”

“ The man, Madam, to whom you will in a few days resign your hand for life, might I think command it now for a few hours.”

“ The man, Sir, who expects the honour of my hand, shall not dare to controul

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"me. Thank God! yet I am free.

"Our affair is not yet accomplished."

"It remains in your own breast, Miss

"Denby, whether it ever shall. I shall

"readily follow the lead you set me."

"Then, Sir, you may choose your-

"self another partner for to-night; for,

"let what will be the consequence, I

"dance with Lord Hilton."

I had a great mind to have prevented her by immediately insisting on Lord Hilton's leaving the room with me; tho' then the life of one must have been lost: but I felt a degree of contempt arise in my breast towards Harriet, which whispered me she was not worth the hazard. At that instant too my eyes attached themselves to the amiable Louisa, I could perceive by her's, that she was, in part, no stranger to our unlover-like altercation. I approached, and seated myself by her.

"Don't

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“ Don’t you dance to-night, Miss Somerville ?”

“ No, Sir.”—“ I am sorry to hear it, as I meant to offer myself to you, if you would have accepted a rejected man.”

“ How came you not to dance with Miss Denby ?”

“ She chose Lord Hilton in preference to me. I am vexed I made her the offer, as it lessens the compliment I wish to pay you.”

“ You are extremely obliging,” returned she, bowing and blushing at the same time. “ But I doubt I could not have accepted your first offer, even if you had been so disposed; as I have just refused Mr. Menil; not having any inclination to dance this evening.”

“ If you really dislike dancing, I would not for the world intreat the favour of your hand; but perhaps you

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“ would not have objected to any man
 “ but Mr. Menil ; nor to him, but from
 “ a motive which every one must ho-
 “ nour you for.—But see—Mr. Menil
 “ has engaged himself.—Now you are
 “ free to choose.”

“ If Mr. Menil will allow me, I will
 “ go down a dance with you ; as you
 “ seem to wish not to appear wholly dis-
 “ concerted with Miss Denby’s beha-
 “ viour.”

I asked Menil’s permission to dance with Miss Somerville ; which he granted readily to me, he said, as I was an *en-
 gaged man*. Louisa did not however seem in spirits.—No ; she thought too much on the man whose resemblance I wish to see above all things. I was not quite myself neither, as Harriet, to shew her power, flirted most intolerably with Hilton.

We danced very little ; rather seeming inclined to chat. The conversation of
 Louisa

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Louisa is always instructive, and at this time I found it more than uncommonly entertaining; and if a certain little uneasiness had not hung upon my spirits, I could have pronounced my evening an happy one.

Miss Denby and I said very little on our return: indeed Charles and Louisa being in the coach prevented us; as I never wish to publish our disagreements. As soon as we got home, she retired to her apartment; where I wish her good repose; as I will your worship; for I am confoundedly sleepy; which you might have perceived perhaps from the amazing stupidity of my letter. As I have some paper remaining, I will not close here. Who knows but after reposing my wearied limbs and aching head, I may entertain you with some brilliant dream, or enlivening reality? In hopes then that the succeeding lines will make you rich amends, I will here lay aside my pen.

July 4th.

O George! I have lost her! My Harriet!—She is no longer mine.—She is gone. Am I then forsaken? Is it true that she has really gone off with Hilton?

I know not what I write.—I am distracted. Could she then so highly resent?—Alas! I am all confusion.—My head and heart is disordered. I was to blame. What right had I to controul her free actions? O! I have lost her, and lost her by my own folly. Curse on me for it!

I have ordered horses.—I will pursue her to the farthest verge of the earth. In vain does Somerville attempt to dissuade me from my fixed resolve. O George! I cannot write—I cannot think—Madness has almost seized your once happy friend

HENRY MONTAGUE.

LET-

LETTER XXXV.

To Miss BARBARA LASCELLES.

Freeman-Lodge, July 5.

FINE confusion here, Bab! your friend Harriet has decamped with my little Hilton. To-morrow I presume the time will come, when, according to some grey-beard, I know not who, tho' they will become one flesh, they will remain two fools. But is Hilton a fool, you cry? Why, perhaps not. And yet I believe he has not taken care to secure her fortune: if not, he will be rather straitened with the addition of *Madame la femme*, while his circumstances are so *derangé*. Harriet has made a fine bargain of it. If she would have taken my counsel, she would have married Montague; she might have retained

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Hilton you know, and have been quite the *ton* immediately.

I do not pretend even to divine the reason for your being so great an advocate for his Lordship ; but no doubt you can assign an extremely proper one.

Perhaps, upon reflection, which you know seldom troubles my giddy head, you may think Lord Hilton may do something for his friend Capel. I fear, Bab, you are building upon a sandy foundation. Let me whisper you : he lately employed all the interest he had to procure his valet a place in the Exchequer, but could not succeed.

You know I am wholly averse to your marrying Capel : I think it will be the ruin of you both, I assure you. Nay, you have known my sentiments on the affair a great while.

“ Lord bless me ! ” you say ; “ let me
“ rub my eyes.—Yes, this letter does
“ come from the lively little widow too ;

“ I could

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“ I could have sworn the formal lady
 “ Fielding had taken up her pen to
 “ lead me a lecture as long as my father’s
 “ rent-roll, or our chaplain’s sermons.”

Very true, Bab ! My letter seems upon
 the humdrum stile ; but a woman finds
 an excuse for every thing, you know.
 My late husband’s mother has taken
 herself to an eternal repose, and his Lord-
 ship insists upon my spending a month
 or two with him—to console him. O !
 I shall be wonderfully suited to the task,
 no doubt. I intended spending some
 little time in this neighbourhood, but
 you see even *I* must submit to the high-
 er powers. Sir William Freeman is
 quite unhappy at my being constrained
 to leave him so soon. His Lady says as
 much, but means infinitely less. She is
 not half pleased with me. I care not.
 The visit was to her husband, not to her.

O that hideous old castle ! I wish it
 were sunk in St. George’s Channel. I

abominate the thoughts of sacrificing so much of my precious time to the formal old Lord. But it must be so; as he has it so largely in his power to increase my fortune; or the Devil might console him for his loss, for

ISABELLA HENLY.

LETTER XXXVI.

To Miss HERBERT.

Woodley-Park, July 10th.

I HAVE been prevented writing to my Emily; ah! how prevented! by the strangest incident.—Miss Denby, would you think it, is gone off to Scotland with Lord Hilton. Sure nothing can equal her baseness to Mr. Montague; unless his affection to her; tho' he acknowledges her to be unworthy his least consideration.

They had not for some days before the races been on such good terms as they ought, considering how near they
were

were being united : tho' certainly she must long ago have known her intentions ; and indeed, from her late behaviour I think it was apparent she wanted to quarrel off with him.

The second race-night Mr. Montague danced with me ; he had in the ball-room a little dispute with Miss Denby. They spoke very seldom the whole evening. I was excessively apprehensive Mr. Montague and Lord Hilton would quarrel ; therefore endeavoured to divert Mr. Montague's attention from them as much as possible, by exerting myself in lively conversation. Thank Heaven ! I succeeded.

The next morning I came into the breakfast parlour about nine o'clock. Mr. Montague was there. After the compliments of the day, he asked me to play him a song he had heard and admired the day before. I complied with his request ; for which he was returning me

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his thanks, in a manner the most engaging and flattering in the world, when a servant, whom I had desired to acquaint Miss Denby breakfast was ready, came into the room in a violent hurry, saying, Miss Denby was not to be found.

We thought she might have gone only to take a walk, and would presently return ; I therefore proposed waiting some time, in hopes she would join us. But in short we were soon put out of all suspense ; for one of the postilions informed James, he saw Miss Denby, at four of the clock in the morning, with her maid, walking across the park, the latter carrying a bundle in her hand. Intelligence from another quarter was conveyed to one of the men, that Miss Denby was seen on the north road in a post-chaise and four with a gentleman.

It will be fruitless to convey to you an idea of the effect this news had on poor Montague, or the surprize we all

My

My father and brother did all they could to compose Mr. Montague's spirits. He was determined to follow them. He would oblige him to give her up, or die in the attempt. I begged my brother would use every method to deter him from putting his rash scheme in execution. Ah! who can describe my agonies lest he should go. My brother told me, he thought my intreaties would be most prevalent. I had not seen him since the first intelligence arrived. In order to gain time, my father proposed his paying a visit himself to Sir William Freeman's, previous to their following the fugitives; they having agreed to go all together in pursuit of them.

As soon as he saw me, he cried, "O Miss Somerville! what a wretch am I!" His looks and manner had such an effect on me, that I could not restrain my tears. "Do you weep? Do you

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“shed tears for me? Amiable Louisa!

“how much am I indebted to you! how

“shall I ever repay this sweetness?”

“By laying aside your fatal inten-

“tions. O! Mr. Montague, what pur-

“pose can it answer, but endangering a

“life, too estimable to be thus sported

“with? Let me intreat you, for the sake

“of your noble relations, to have some

“consideration for your own safety.

“Think what will be their sufferings,

“should any ill consequences arise from

“your meeting Lord Hilton?—ill they

“must be! Think how superior will

“be their distress to that which now

“overwhelms you; since you only de-

“plore the loss of an object who has

“proved herself not only unworthy

“your affection, but theirs.—Oh! what

“will theirs be, when they deplore the

“loss of *you*?”—I could not proceed for

my tears and sobs.

He

He seemed irresolute. He knew not on what to determine. But happily my father's visit to Freeman Lodge took up so much time as rendered all thoughts of overtaking them entirely vain: and my father had previously engaged his word of honour that he would not set off without him.

Just after my father returned, Mr. Montague started and was going to leave the room in a violent hurry. Terrified lest he should elude our wishes, I stepped up to him, and, taking both his hands in mine, begged him to compose himself. I instantly dropped them, finding they burnt like fire: Indeed his countenance plainly evinced he was greatly indisposed. With some difficulty we prevailed on him to lose a little blood, which was highly beneficial to him; tho' still he discovered great propensity to a fever.

My

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My brother,--O! how my heart thanked him!--behaved to him with the utmost tenderness: Said so many sweet consoling things: Never leaving him an instant after he went to bed, which he was obliged to do immediately after bleeding. He got no rest that night; and in the morning was much worse. Doctor Bladen who attended him, told him his speedy recovery depended entirely on his own efforts; but if he continued to give way to the despondence which first seized him, no one could be answerable for the consequence.

My father, with his usual humanity and good-sense, used every method of comfort: tho' he himself suffered not a little. He loved Miss Denby for her father's sake; and was sensibly affected at the imprudent step she had taken. *Imprudent*, it can only be stiled as to her marriage with Lord Hilton; but when we reflect on her conduct to Mr. Montague,

gue, what terms can be used to give a comprehensive idea of the flagrancy of it?

I performed the office of nurse to this most amiable injured man. Ah! how delightfully were my pains repaid when I saw him recover, and heard him repeat his recovery was owing to my diligent attendance and salutary conversations!

One day that my father and brother were obliged to be absent on some country-business, I prevailed on Mr. Montague to repose himself on a sofa, as he had complained of not sleeping in the night; to sooth him to rest, I took up a book; my reading had the desired effect. After a sweet sleep of two hours he awaked greatly refreshed.

I could not help expressing my extreme satisfaction at finding him so much better. "What a heart is yours," cried he, taking my hand, "that could be thus affected by *my* illness! What must it

I

" not

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“ not have endured had I been the object
“ of your *affection*?” I averted my crim-
soned face, and with some difficulty
replied, “ My heart can make no dis-
“ tinction in distress. Every object that
“ merits compassion must be the sole ob-
“ ject of a tender mind.”

My brother's return prevented him
from saying any more ; and relieved me
from a state easily conceived.

O ! my Emily ! I can hardly describe
to you the feelings of my heart. Miss
Denby is now married. But what does
that signify ? I never have yet formed a
wish or hope. Am I then beginning to
deceive myself ? Ah ! save me, my be-
loved friend, by thy counsels, from falling
into the fatal error of self-deception !
Ah ! let me not, self-deluded, feel yet
greater anguish than which at present
rends the heart of thy

LOUISA SOMERVILLE !

LETTER

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LETTER XXXVII.

To HENRY MONTAGUE, *Esq;*

Oak-hill, July 9. *

MY dear Harry, I waited for a letter from you, before I ventured to write to you; merely because I knew not in what mode of style to address you; whether in the congratulatory, which I was rather inclined to I confess—or in the melancholy one of condolance. However, as you now seem to view your disappointment in a rational and true light, I shall have no fear before my eyes of incurring your displeasure.

The woman who could act by a man of worth and honour, as Miss Denby has by you, is, in my mind, and I sincerely hope in your's, an object too despicable to give pain for a long season.

My obligations to your true friends at Woodley-park, I shall ever remember
with

* Mr. Montague's letter is omitted.

with gratitude, for preventing you from following the unworthy fugitives. My dear Montague! where could have been the use of such a rash and futile proceeding? You could not suppose *he* would give her up; and if he did, could *you* have forced her to have been your's? Thank God! Thank God! She is not! No; my friend! I hope there is in store for you much greater happiness than was ever in the power of a vile coquet to dispense. Yet, in that prospect there is a mysterious cloud: One that has lately appeared. Before, I had not a doubt.—But I must know your sentiments before I risk my opinion.

Is *your* heart sufficiently at ease to receive pleasure in hearing that every wish of your *friend's* heart is accomplished. How vain that question! Pardon me, Montague, for asking it. Last Tuesday I was made the happiest of men. My amiable Fanny blessed me with her hand.

THE FINE LADY. 43

O Montague! what felicity can equal mine! What a change has a few months made in my situation! Reduced at one time to deep despair, I was almost tempted to counter-act the designs of the Almighty, and deprive myself of a being grown hateful to me. Had I put my rash and wicked resolution in practice—I shudder at the horrid idea—what, and where had I been now? Plunged into endless misery to shun limited grief, for that consolation amidst all our troubles we have that *they must* end with our lives,—I should have missed the joys Heaven had in store for me on earth, by basely flying from them.

My uncle has behaved kindly to me on this occasion. He has made over to me five hundred a year to enable me to make a suitable settlement on my beloved.

At present we are with him; I think he seems unwilling to part with us: but
I would

44 THE FINE LADY.

I would by no means live continually with him. There is a pretty spot about fifteen miles from hence, which I believe I shall rent, if I can get it on reasonable terms. When I am settled, I hope I shall be favoured with your company. I do not think it will be a wise plan for you to go to Bellefont, as the sight of the preparations for a certain event may recall unpleasing reflections. Therefore I wish you not to go there at present. Your stay at Woodley will I suppose be very short now, as the purpose has failed for which you became a visiter.

Indeed, my dear Harry, you had better come to us directly. My uncle behaves much better than he used to do; and I think we can by our mutual endeavours divert you. My sweet Fanny has the highest esteem for you, because you are *my* friend, abstracted from your personal

THE FINE LADY. 45

sonal merit. But that you know already,
as well as that I am faithfully your's,

GEORGE LENOX.

LETTER XXXIX.

To Miss BARBARA LASCELLES.

Berwick, July 8.

URGED by you I have taken a
hasty step—the grave-ones may
call it a rash one. Let them stile it
as they will, it is done: and as Monimia
expresses it,

“I have bound up a weight of cares,

“And how the burthen will be borne, none knows.”

Perhaps neither can I give any very
good reason for my actions; well then,
I have the world on my side still: few
I believe, even of the very sagacious, can
always assign just ones.

I suppose you will have no difficulty in
divining my meaning; as the date of

46 THE FINE LADY.

my letter, and my sentiments when I last wrote, might inform you of what my intentions would produce.

I wonder how my flight was received at Woodley: If you should have heard, I wish you would inform me by letter, which, if you direct according to the inclosed address, will reach me.

But is it not time to say something of my Lord? He is at present all I can wish him. Ah! Bab, Montague would never have made such an husband as I find in him.

I am a little perplexed about my future proceedings. It will be absolutely necessary to write or send to Woodley, not only for my cloaths, of which I have not plenty with me, but to know if my guardian will give up any part or the whole of my fortune. Lord Hilton has not mentioned the least hint about it. He seems to think he possesses the whole world in me. How different our union from the
mer-

THE FINE LADY. 47

mercenary one planned by Montague !
How sick was I of his odious parch-
ments, &c. !

My dear Bab, I wish you and your little
Capel were with us. What an enchant-
ing *partie quarie* we should make ! But
the Fates decreed I should pass the Rubi-
con before your Ladyship. A propos,
I am not a little pleased with my new
title, I assure you. Your sober mortals
may preach what they will about trifles ;
for my part, I think title, rank and
wealth very great essentials, and worth
taking a long journey for.

Believe me, dear Bab, your devoted,
&c.

HARRIET HILTON.

My dear fellow presents his love, and
kisses your fair hands.

L E T-

48 THE FINE LADY.

L E T T E R XL.

To Captain CAPEL.

Berwick, July 8th.

MY affair with Harriet Denby is most happily accomplished; and you may invoke the Muses to enable you to compose an epithalamium as soon as you please; for I am already put in full possession of the above Lady, and I hope to touch her fortune soon, or the devil take me if I would have touched her person—in the matrimonial meaning of the word I would wish to be understood.

You never saw such an adoring husband as I make. Husband! I am the humble lover yet. But thank God! that need not last always. Tho' I do not mean to take up the part of a tyrant neither; yet an abject submission will never do with my charmer, were I inclined to
place

place myself under petticoat-government. Montague lost his chance with her, by letting her perceive the ascendancy she had over him.

Capricious as she is, I certainly should never have gained her, had it not been for the ingenious intelligence Bab used now-and-then to give me of Montague's intentions; when, God knows, she was as ignorant of them as she was of your's with respect to herself. Faith, Ned, it will never do. Upon my soul, you had better strike a bold stroke, and attack the widow. Curse me, if I do not think her advice to Bab, against marrying you, is because she has a *penchant* for you herself. That old scoundrel Lascelles will never give you a farthing with the girl, if you run off with her, or suffer her to run away with you, which seems most likely; for she is a fine forward piece, egad!

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D

She

She has, to be sure, a great deal of vivacity ; which by the bye she borrows chiefly from Lady Bell. But she has not beauty enough to attract the notice of any great man, whereby you might get advanced, even if you could submit to be so advanced.

It will give you no favourable idea of me, in the character of a husband, to hear me in the first week discommending matrimony ; but in your case I think it will be blameable and impolitic. If indeed you was deeply in love with the girl, and she capable of entertaining the same strength of passion for you, you might retire upon half-pay ; and what her father might, on your good behaviour, be induced to allow you, with your great stock of affection, would perhaps procure you a *decent* subsistence. But look into yourselves, and you will discover the motives, for the gratification of which you would both marry : you, for
ten

THE FINE LADY. 51

ten thousand pounds, if you could get them, to enable you to support your figure in the *beau monde*, and to provide for your favourite Sultana; she, to be freed from the restraints of her family-connexions, and to exhibit her person at every public place,—flirting with every coxcomb, and taking every fashionable method of breaking her husband's heart, if he cared sixpence for her. Have I not defined your mutual reasons for entering into *the holy state of matrimony*? And are not these the reigning reasons for every one's marrying? True, Ned, your question is apposite enough:—but you will miss the ten thousand pounds; and what will you do with the girl?

Now with your humble servant the case is widely different. My help-meet must, when of age, be put in possession of her fortune. Perhaps, as old Somerville is a man of honour, he will give it up before:—that serves nearly to redeem

my estate, which at present is in a most cursed confused way. Abstracted from title, which is one of my wife's ruling passions, Montague would have been ten times a better match. But I have nothing to do with *her* motives.—She is mine. I have her safe.

Faith, Ned, she is a charming creature. But there wants the heart to render our intercourses with women truly delightful. It would surprise most people, to be told, a young Lady should take such immense pains to marry a fellow; break thro' the most solemn engagements with another; and all this without being in love with her husband.—And yet this is certainly the state of the case. I am sure she never yet knew what it was to love any man. If I take the trouble then, I may become the object of her passion.—But why should I, when every purpose is sufficiently answered?

She

THE FINE LADY. 53

She is a strange, inconsistent, lovely woman. But she has forty thousand pounds, you rogue.—That sum will procure me pleasures enough.

When you see Lucy, present my tenderest wishes to her. I hope we shall soon meet. Tell her, she is dearer to me than ever. I mean tho' to write to her very soon. Your's,

HILTON.

LETTER XLI.

To Miss SOMERVILLE.

Herbert-hall, July 10th.

THE very best news I have heard a long while. Why this is as it should be. Thank Heaven! my prayers have prevailed. I adore Hilton for the part he has acted. He will have enough of his wife, I make no doubt.

I was never half so well pleased in my life. O my loved Louisa! I shall yet see

D 3

you

you happy. Montague has ever professed the highest sensibility of your merit, and now, that the fascinating Harriet is removed, he will do more—he will love you.

You may now, my dear, indulge your so painfully-concealed attachment; may now expect to meet a reward for your sufferings. Ah! do not fear to look forward to hope, joyful hope!

My attendance on my grandmother, who has been for some time indisposed, prevents my writing more at present. Indeed, for what purpose should I write? I can say nothing but what you are already acquainted with; for to tell you, my heart rejoices in your happiness at all times, and that my best wishes are your's, is nothing new. Let me then go to my nursery, and you rest with the above assurances.

EMILY HERBERT.

LET-

THE FINE LADY. 55

LETTER XLII.

To Lady HILTON.

Woodley-park, July 19th.

MADAM,

AMONG the congratulations of a self-applauding heart, permit me to intrude mine.

The long friendship which subsisted between your father and me, a friendship which induced him to consign you over to me at his death, sufficiently authorises me to deliver my sentiments to you without reserve.

It pains my aged heart to think I must address the daughter of my friend, in a stile less tender than I would use to my own child. But you, Madam, have thrown me off. You have despised the counsels of age. May you never repent your abusing my confidence, or your inconstancy, to give it

no harsher title, to the most amiable of men!

The conduct of your Ladyship,—it is fitting you should have your title, as you have purchased it at the price of your truth and plighted vows—must ever, in the eye of the impartial world, be reprehensible. Had not Mr. Montague's behaviour to you been strictly consistent with a man of honour,—had you openly and candidly confessed to me, in our last conversation on that subject, that your heart did *not* feel a return of affection for that gentleman; had you not told me, on your honour, Lord Hilton was under engagements to Miss Lascelles, some excuse might have been alledged for your proceedings. But what extenuation, let me ask Lady Hilton, can she plead, to exculpate her from the allegation of breaking her faith to the man who loved her, and whom she professed to love? betraying her veracity and word of ho-

OUR

THE FINE LADY. 57

nour to her guardian, and robbing her bosom-friend of a lover. These, Madam, are heavy charges, and true. I write with an energy you may stile the impertinent eagerness of old age; but I am deeply wounded by the very imprudent part you have so recently acted. My honour is wounded. I was your guaranty, and looked on myself as answerable for your conduct. You have thought proper to withdraw yourself from my protection. I was invested by your honoured father with the disposition of your fortune; but that, I think, I have no longer a right to manage. No, Madam, as you have disposed of your person, you are at full liberty to do the same by your property. I resign all right entirely to it.

But yet, for the sake of my old friend, I would willingly give you one piece of advice; and as it will be the last I shall ever offer, and I believe the first you ever followed, I would wish you not to

58 THE FINE LADY.

reject it; it is this : I mean to deliver over notes to the amount of forty thousand pounds, together with the interest since your father's decease, to yourself. I do not imagine his Lordship has made any settlement on you—In favour to him, we will suppose he was too much in love, to think of money-matters, and your Ladyship too much in haste to give him time. Yet, altho' your confidence in him was so unlimited, I fancy you will think it necessary to secure something for yourself; which, with your fortune in your own hands, you will be enabled to do.

I believe, Madam, you will do me the justice to think I have given you my disinterested advice; yet, if you do not, I can acquit my own conscience, and remain satisfied with my own integrity.

I hope likewise you do not think I mean to depreciate the merit of your Lord. God forbid I should seek to lessen

THE FINE LADY. 59

sen the man in your eyes, for whom you have sacrificed so much.

I remain, Madam,

Your humble servant,

C. SOMERVILLE.

LETTER XLIII.

To GEORGE LENOX, *Esq.*

Woodley-Park, June 20.

I Rejoice in your felicity, my dear Lenox, as much as I should have done in my own. Nay, I think the knowledge of *your* happiness has made *me* happy. I feel all my disappointments alleviated by that knowledge: yet do I find a little allay to the pleasure your invitation would otherwise have given me, had you not made it on the seeming impropriety of my continuing here, now, as you say, *the purpose for which I became a visitor has failed.* True, I am really no acquaintance of this family, but thro' the

60 THE FINE LADY.

means of Miss Denby. Lenox! my hand can trace her name without trembling. Have I not gained a victory?

But would it not be the highest ingratitude to quit a family, to whom I have such obligations;—who have treated me with the tenderness of a relation, during an indisposition occasioned by a severe disappointment;—to whose attentions and kindness I am indebted for the return of health and peace?—And does Lenox, the friend and monitor of my heart, counsel me to leave this family abruptly—because they cannot be serviceable in the purpose which introduced them to my acquaintance?

Oh! did you know what balm to my aching heart only the conversation, mild as the vernal spring, of the gentle compassionating Louisa has bestowed, you would not urge me to quit scenes which may recall unpleasing reflections, you say: but in reality they do not. I am

THE FINE LADY. 61

every day more convinced that Miss Denby never could have made me happy. Thank Heaven! she has not, or shall ever make me miserable.

With the form of an angel, her soul is a common soul. But I seek not to develope her frailties; I want not to know them, to steel my heart against the remembrance of her charms. I am whole hours without ever thinking on her. Yet surely this does not proceed from a natural inconstancy in my nature. No, I am sure it does not, but from a conviction of her unworthiness, and, let me add, a sensibility of the extremest merit in the most amiable of women. I wish you had seen the care, the most affectionate care, of the sweet Louisa. O Lenox! what an angelic creature she is! I never, never can forget what I owe her.

I can account for her affliction at my distress and illness no otherwise than from the natural goodness of her benign heart;
for

62 THE FINE LADY.

for that little incident I mentioned to you of the picture, convinces me I can have no greater share in her breast than friendship. But a friendship how exalted ! Happy the man who can call her his friend ! To be friend to such a woman secures us the interest of all the virtues.

BUT should I, just recovered from the fascinating charms of alluring beauty, fall a sacrifice to inestimable worth ? Should the mental qualifications of an amiable woman draw my soul in soft bondage, herself only capable of a return of friendship ? Could I be content with friendship ?—Alas ! I fear not. No, Lenox ; I was born for social life. The matrimonial life is the only life worth calling so. Must I, because disappointed in my first view, entirely lay my plan aside, and remain for ever comfortless and alone, because my intended wife

THE FINE LADY. 63

wife deserted me? Yes, I will marry, but when, or whom, is yet in the breast of Fate.

* * *

MY sisters have each written to me. They scruple not to congratulate me on my escape: they do more; they ardently wish I may be soon united to a more deserving woman, and describe Miss Somerville in terms which, to those who know her not, would sound flattering. I shall answer both letters in one, as I cannot make use of a brotherly expression which each do not equally deserve.

Mr. Somerville has wrote to Lady Hilton. I think, if she is not wholly divested of feeling, some parts of his letter will touch her heart. I am however totally incurious what effect it has on her. I wish her happy, but never wish to have an opportunity of telling

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ling her so. I am sure you will commend me for not seeking her company. I wish not to put it in the power of the capricious deity to vex me more on her account.

Your's,

HENRY MONTAGUE.

L E T T E R XLIV.

*To the Right Honourable the Countesses of
BENTICK and CHESTER.*

Woodley-park, July 21.

IT gives me a sensible pleasure, amidst my disappointments, that my dearest sisters mingle their commendations with their affectionate regard for my welfare.

You approve of my conduct.—Be assured that my placidity is not affected. My heart is absolutely more at ease now than for some weeks before our final separation.

I agree

THE FINE LADY. 65

I agree with my dear Lady Bentick that I had made a wrong choice; and I adore my dear Lady Chester for the delicacy of her compliment, and the share the amiable Louisa has in it. Indeed it is that share, which makes it valuable: compliments are unnecessary between faithful friends and dear relatives. It is my happiness, my boast, that I stand in both these situations to the worthy persons, to whom I am writing.

With what an agreeable facility you ladies overcome all obstacles! You form a wish; and instantly see it accomplished—in your own imaginations. Ah! my good sisters, your sagacity I fear will remain doubtful. I own that Miss Somerville's friendship for me is lively and sincere: without the imputation of vanity I may own this, for various have been the testimonies she has honoured me with; but, at the same time I tell you this, I must likewise tell you, I can expect
no

66 THE FINE LADY.

no more than friendship. I am convinced her heart has been long engaged; but to whom is a secret. Sensible, prudent and discreet, she has perhaps made a choice she dares not discover. Perhaps she has given her heart to some base, fordid wretch. Something of this kind must be the case, or the known indulgence of her father would prompt her to disclose that secret, which preys upon her peace, and undermines her health. Sweet, gentle Louisa! May thou be blest with the man whose picture thou contemplatest; and may he feel for thee as exalted a friendship as I do, joined to as tender a passion as thou indulgest for him!

But even if the heart of this amiable woman was not engaged, have you not, have you not, my dear sisters, overlooked a necessary kind of delicacy in the wished-for circumstance before us? My gratitude, though great, will not permit me to overlook it; nor would *you*, I am
sensible,

THE FINE LADY. 67

sensible, was not the sisterly affection you both honour me with so extensive as to overcome every other consideration. Would there not be some reason to conjecture,—lovely as Louisa is,—that I married, as some are said to do, through motives of revenge? Ah! I would not bear to have my love for my wife, be she who she will, suspected. Even then, if Miss Somerville would be induced to honour me with her hand, I think this event could never be effected. My wife must be convinced from reason and plausibility, that she is sole empress of my heart. She must, she shall have no doubts.

You will tell me, as Lenox does, that I ought not to stay longer at Woodley. Upon my honour I am apprehensive I must subscribe to your opinion: the first time I found difficulty in not dissenting from it. It is certainly exposing myself to temptation. Friendship and
love

68 THE FINE LADY.

love are nearly allied. Perhaps I may find myself in the labyrinths of the one, while I fancy I am only straying in the smooth paths of the other.

If I can then, I will retire from this charming place—for charming it is, abstracted from its inhabitants,—and seek a peaceful refuge either with my amiable sisters, or with my worthy friend: but I promise you, if Mr. Somerville should be importunate, or if the gentle Louisa should with one glance of her dove-like eyes request my stay, I must still remain their guest.

You, my dear sisters, will excuse it, as well as the many inconsistencies inherent to your brother. In his affection however to his dear Maria and Charlotte, he will be ever invariably the same,

HENRY MONTAGUE.

L E T.

LETTER XLV.

To Miss HERBERT.

Woodley-park, July 27.

HE is going, Emily! He will no longer be our guest! Ah! how shall I support his absence? How accustom myself not to see him “every day and all the day?” No longer to behold him as an inmate of our house—O Emily, Emily! wonder not that my heart melts at the approaching separation. I am unable to dwell upon the idea.

The last fortnight Mr. Montague, being quite recovered, went off pleasantly. Indeed I thought some days of it the happiest I had ever known. But it does not signify, Emily; happiness is not for me.

This day as we were sitting after dinner—I know not how it was brought about—

about,—Mr. Montague mentioned something about travelling——you know Charles is going to join the regiment--He asked my brother if he would call on him either at Lord Bentick's or Mr. Lenox's. "You are not going to leave us, Mr. Montague?" asked my father. "I have been a long time an intruder, my dear Mr. Somerville; It is now fit I should put an end to my visit: but I shall quit your house with some regret I own, and with a breast filled with the utmost gratitude for the many favours I have received:—on Monday I proposed taking my leave of your family."

While he was speaking, my labouring heart scarcely beat; I felt all confusion—My senses seemed going—My eyesight left me—and a peach I was pairing for him dropped from my trembling hands. Happily I recovered myself before I had attracted the notice of any one.

THE FINE LADY. 71

one. O Emily! though I besought the Almighty not to give my soul up to self-delusion, yet I fear I am become a sacrifice to it. His behaviour——ever tender——has for this week past been so flatteringly distinguishing; his looks, his actions so pleasingly engaging.——Emily! I am lost! Delivered over a prey to endless misery.

When he has left us, that tender friendship, which now I believe he entertains for me, will be lost in the endeavours of his friends to fix his affections on some amiable woman, who may teach him to lose all remembrance of the faithless Miss Denby.

A round of pleasures will obliterate from his mind those hours we have lately passed.——Those tender acts of friendship, which we have mutually exchanged, will be worn, with the image of Louisa, from his memory. After having lived so many weeks together,

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we shall only be common acquaintance. Perhaps he may now-and-then pay us a short visit; but Oh! my Emily! will that, can that satisfy a heart like mine?

But while I am pouring out my complaints to you, I am anticipating this dreaded separation, by losing so many moments—now how precious!—of his company. I leave you then, my Emily; but I only leave you for him—and for him I would leave life with pleasure.

Adieu!

LOUISA SOMERVILLE.

L E T T E R XLVI.

To GEORGE LENOX *Esq.*

Bentick-house, July 30.

HERE I am, George, after taking leave of a family to whom I think myself highly indebted. Upon my soul!
I never

THE FINE LADY. 73

I never was more softened in my life when I took the last look at Woodley. I could almost say, with my favourite Shenstone, "My path I could scarcely discern." But you know I am rather of a tender nature, not like Othello "unused to the melting mood." Well, faith! there is something in parting from those we esteem very touching. I never liked it in my life; and was never more sensible of it than in this last instance.

I wish I had gone quietly to Bellefont. I am totally unfit for company; and all the world is here. That eternal old prating Lady Fitz-Thomas makes me mad. She for ever singles me out for to exercise, her everlasting propensity to drive silence out of the world; then there is that affected coquet, Lady Mary Saunders, ever upon the watch to surprize one's heart, by a childish simper, or discovering some charm or other by attempting to be familiar. These I

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mortally

mortally hate ; but I curse Ned Bentick by the hour in my heart for continually talking of Louisa Somerville. He is every moment praising her ; as if no one could see beauties in her but himself. It gives me the highest pleasure to hear my sisters lavish commendations on her.—I cannot express the satisfaction their praise, so properly bestowed, conveys ; but when Ned joins them, I wish him at the devil very devoutly.

How insipid does the conversation of this senseless tribe appear to me, after the genuine undisssembled worth of the sweet Louisa ! Modest, mild, edifying, in her conversation. Would to Heaven I had not left Woodley, or could return to it with propriety !

August 1st.

MY sisters want to persuade me to make an offer of my hand to Miss Somerville. The palpitation of my heart at
their

THE FINE LADY. 75

their proposition sufficiently discovered that I should do it no great violence in thus disposing of it. But have I not abundant reason to suppose that the heart of this lovely maid has already made its election? Can I, while I have reason to believe this to be the case, with any degree of propriety make an offer of myself? So, is it not courting disappointment? And would it not be conveying pain to her gentle bosom? Ah! Lenox! then I must be silent.—I agree with you—now that you have put me in mind of a thousand trifling incidents,—which, while I was under the fascination of Harriet, passed by unheeded—that Louisa has given many proofs of a very lively friendship for me. The circumstance of her fainting at Vauxhall—and her many attentions would have created very flattering hopes in my breast, had I not been convinced of her attachment elsewhere by her carrying about her

the picture of a lover—for nothing less it could be. I do not say it is impossible for a lady to wear the picture of a man without being in love with him; but it is very improbable that a woman of Miss Somerville's sentiments should; and for this obvious reason, because she is by much too generously-principled to give the slightest encouragement to any man whom she cannot love. She has within the course of a few months refused three advantageous offers. To what are we to attribute these refusals from a young lady who professes to honour the marriage state, but to a prior engagement?—But then, to whom can she be engaged?

The purity of her spotless soul, I am sure, would not permit her to carry on any clandestine affair of this kind. And what man is there—however exalted—to whom her virtues would not give honour? But it appears to me that the charming, accomplished, heavenly-minded

ed

ed Louisa loves without hope. O George! is it fitting that the canker-worm should feed on her damask cheek? Pshaw! I am interrupted by that old hag again. She will never let me be at quiet a moment. To be sure I must be writing to some favourite lady. Ah! I cannot stay—she will be in, in an instant. Adieu!

* * *

August 3d.

TWO or three more conversations of the like sort, with that I have just now held with Maria and Charlotte, will most incontestibly send me packing to Woodley. I must have a trial of skill with this hidden lover of Miss Somerville's.

Lady Chester says, from laying all circumstances together, she is of opinion that Louisa is in much the same predicament as I was sometime ago;

E 3 that

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that is, inflaved by a passion for an unworthy object: but that as my passion prevented not my being highly sensible of Miss Somerville's merit, so her partiality has yet left her heart open to friendship,—a friendship, which, joined to her evident struggles against the indulgence of her ill-placed passion, may produce similar feelings to those which I now experience. In short, she says she has great reason on her side; and faith! I have some *presentiment* she has between you and I. At least I am but where I am; for I have no doubt of forfeiting the valued friendship of the amiable girl.

As this matter now stands, if you have a mind to display your rhetoric in an elaborate letter, to persuade me to follow what you have a secret knowledge is more agreeable to my own inclinations, now is your time to put in for the palm of glory. The memory of Cicero and Demosthenes will be no more
thought

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thought of; and our modern orators Sheridan and Foote will hang their heads, conscious of inferiority. In short, you see I give you an opportunity of immortalizing your fame, of which you can have no doubt, as your *fiat* is to be pronounced by

HENRY MONTAGUE.

LETTER XLVII.

To GEORGE LENOX, *Esq*;

Aug. 14th.

YOUR oratory, my friend, has prevailed; and your fame is established throughout all ages. You really took more pains than were necessary. I am on the wing for Woodley. I apprized Mr. Somerville of my being obliged to come and look at an estate, which a friend of mine wanted to purchase in his neighbourhood, and that his great civility to me induced me to hope he would

not be displeased if I spent a day or two with him for that purpose.— This note I sent off this morning by Robert, who is to bring me an answer hither at the George-inn at M.—where I am impatiently waiting for the success of my planned invitation.

Heaven send me good luck ! for I begin to be earnestly interested in the event. I should despise myself, if I could discover in my breast the least lurking revenge, or even a wish to know how her faithless Ladyship receives the news of my being able to support her perfidy. No ; be assured, Lenox, I speak the truth, when I aver, I do not wish any thing otherwise than it is. I have no malice, no inveteracy against either the husband or wife. Let them be happy, if they are capable of making each other so.—

A letter, by Jupiter !—If I write another word till I reach dear Woodley, brand me for a cold poltroon.

Wood-

Woodley-Park, Aug. 15.

MY invitation, tho' I was too elated then to tell you so, was just such as I would have wished it. My sweet Louisa, tho' prepared to expect me, received me with a confusion which gave her new charms, and set my heart a-glowing; and, had not the damned picture popped into my head, I should have given way to the most flattering fumnises. Adieu! the breakfast bell rings; and I fly to pay the amiable maid the compliments of the morning.

MAY this blest morn for ever——
By Heavens! I don't think I can write
prose,—Say, thou much-esteemed friend,
in what poetic strain shall I address thee?

Upon my soul, George, I am half out
of my senses with joy and rapture. Talk

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not of Harriet—She never had a heart to bestow. No, it was given the enchanting Louisa to excite the highest bliss, and to thy happy friend to receive it.

This blest morn I proposed to the dear girl to walk with me in the garden. Desirous of giving me pleasure, she complied. I led her to the alcove, which I have before described to you. As I seated myself by her, I told her I had not enjoyed so happy a moment since I had quitted Woodley.

“Not happy,” said she, in the softest accents, “when you were surrounded by
“your friends?”

“Because,” answered I, taking her hand, and looking tenderly at her, “I
“left a friend behind me, dearer than
“those I met. You, Louisa, was that
“friend: more I dare not aspire to.
“Would to God I could! But, in that
“sacred character, permit me to ask you
“one question.”—

“What—

"What—what—would you say!"

"Be not alarmed, my charming Miss Somerville.—Compose that gentle bosom."——"But what question will you ask?"

"Only this: Was not your heart—
"O Louisa! tho' I fancied I had courage to open my soul before you, I find I am not able. Dear Miss Somerville, pardon me.—I am too intrusive.—
"Another time."—

"Oh! no; let me hear what your labouring heart struggles to conceal. If I can relieve that heart, how blest shall I be!"

"I have the highest and most just sensibility of the benignity of Miss Somerville's heart. All that she can bestow, I am convinced she will grant the man who tenderly loves her; but I must not presumptuously hope for impossibilities."

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“ Were I not fully apprized of your
“ generosity, I should be induced to ima-
“ gine Mr. Montague meant to amuse
“ himself with my weakness. What
“ other interpretation,” continued she,
fixing her eyes on the ground, “ can I
“ give to words so mysterious ?”

“ My words, my dear Miss Somer-
“ ville, will admit of but one interpreta-
“ tion, and that the true one : I adore
“ you, Louisa. Yet as the heart, in the
“ disposal of itself, will not be controlled,
“ I expect no other advantage from the
“ confession I have made, than the con-
“ tinuance of a friendship which consti-
“ tutes my present happiness. Ever sen-
“ sible of your worth, now my eyes are
“ opened to the failings of Miss Denby,
“ I am wholly devoted to you. But
“ your heart, my amiable Miss Somer-
“ ville, is otherwise engaged.”—

“ My heart engaged ! Who told you
“ my heart was *otherwise* engaged ? It

“has no engagement but to”—She stopped on the sudden, discovering much perturbation in her looks and gestures.

“Ah Louisa! is not your heart engaged to the happy man whose picture you carry about you?”

“It is, Sir,” cried she, stealing a look at me, then casting her eyes down, and plaiting her apron-strings, in some agitation. “But if it is, that attachment can never interfere with your wishes.” Her voice was so low, I could hardly hear her sounds.

“Is that attachment so slight, that you can withdraw it—or do you no longer feel the partiality?”

“Indeed I do,” replied she, turning her eyes on me. “I never felt my partiality so strong as at this dear moment.—O Mr. Montague! blind to your own perfections, and equally ignorant of the artless sensibility of my heart, how shall I confess to you, that
you,

“you, and you alone—I cannot proceed.—If your heart feels what you say it does, it can guess.”—

“And so it does, my charmer,” cried I, in raptures, catching her in my arms. “Am I, am I then dear to you? Bless me, my lovely girl, with the enchanting sounds that thy Montague is dear to his beloved Louisa.”——If this specimen is not sufficient to give you an idea of my felicity, volumes would be wrote in vain. Lenox! my heart never felt so light as it now does.

Dear amiable girl! to be assured that she loves me, is all the blessing I can ask of Heaven.

But the picture, you say,—what becomes of that? Ah! my dear boy, the discovery of that little picture, which had given my poor heart many a confounded twitch, makes part of my happiness. It is the exact resemblance of the most faithful of men, drawn by the hand of love.

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love. O! if ever the curse of inconstancy should seize me, may the remembrance of her matchless love and worth beam on my imagination, and fix me her's for ever!

She has given me permission to declare my sentiments to her father and brother; for tho' she says she could reject lovers without their knowledge, she cannot encourage one without their joint concurrence. How amiably prudent her conduct! How could I be blind so long?

Adieu! my dear George. There are not many in the world happier than your

HENRY MONTAGUE.

LETTER XLVIII.

To Miss HERBERT.

Woodley-park, Aug. 16th.

HOW different are the sensations I now feel, when I write to my beloved Emily of the amiable Montague,
from

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from what that subject used to excite ! How pleasingly do the hours steal away, now each bears the signature of happiness ! Yes, my Emily ! I shall be happy. Montague points out the path, and with such a guide your Louisa cannot miss the way.

My dear father rejoices in the prospect of his daughter's felicity. I have assumed courage to tell that respectable parent, I could never have yielded my hand to any other man. He wonders not at my partiality to one so estimable ; tho' he tenderly sympathizes in my former distress.

My brother has been written to. I hope he will come as soon as in his power, as I should be sorry Mr. Montague should have the least reason to believe he ~~was~~ slighted by my family.

How inexpressibly kind in you, my dearest Emily, to quiet my apprehensions, lest a latent desire of piquing Lady Hilton should have induced Mr. Montague

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to address me. Happy as the discovery of his sentiments made me, I yet had some alloy; but in how flattering a manner have you reconciled me to myself, as I may say, in setting the affair in another light—and I hope a true one?

Ah, my dear Emily! will he, do you think, love me as well as if he never knew Miss Denby? Will he not draw comparisons between her and me, which will be to my disadvantage? But I have asked similar questions in my last letter. How weak is the human heart, which refines on its enjoyments till they become anxieties!

O! my dear, I wish you were with me. How happy should I be, if your father would allow me to hope for so great a favour.

Believe me to be, with the utmost sincerity, faithfully your's,

LOUISA SOMERVILLE.

L E T.

L E T T E R XLIX.

To GEORGE LENOX, *Esq;*

Woodley-park, Aug. 27th.

Captain Somerville and I have had a little altercation, which I am sorry for; tho' I readily excuse it, as it, on his part, proceeded from his almost unequalled love to his charming sister.

When his father made known my desire of being united to his family, he expressed not any dissatisfaction at the proposal: but this morning, when we were by ourselves, he said, "he was extremely surprized to hear, in so few weeks I could transfer my affections, and likewise sorry that his sister should be the object."

I told him, "he must be sensible I had been exceedingly ill used by Miss Denby, and that her perfidy had entirely divested me of those favourable senti-

“ sentiments I once indulged. I was a
 “ friend to the matrimonial state ; and
 “ that I had received abundant proof of
 “ the unexampled sweetness of Miss So-
 “ merville’s temper and qualifications, to
 “ authorize me in the opinion she would
 “ make me happier than any other wo-
 “ man in the world. I was extremely
 “ concerned to hear him say, that he was
 “ sorry I had chosen his sister for the ob-
 “ ject, tho’ wholly at a loss to develop
 “ his motive.”

“ My sister has perfections that would
 “ give honour to a monarch. Nor
 “ shall the greatest man on earth call her
 “ his, who has at best but a divided heart
 “ to offer. Louisa, Sir, is not a woman
 “ to be trifled with.”

“ Nor shall she, Mr. Somerville.”

“ By Heaven ! she shall not, Mr. Mon-
 “ tague, while my life remains.”

“ You are warm, Sir. Our conversa-
 “ tion, I hoped, would have been an ami-
 “ cable

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“ cable one. For your sister’s sake, Mr.
 “ Somerville, I will bear a great deal ;
 “ but in my tender affection for her, I
 “ must not forget the man, neither sup-
 “ port insolent threats from a young man,
 “ whose concurrence, tho’ to be wished,
 “ is by no means necessary. I have your
 “ father’s consent : I have reason to be-
 “ lieve I have a share, and no inconfi-
 “ derable one, in your sister’s heart : I
 “ would wish to call her brother my bro-
 “ ther ; but while I am conscious of the
 “ purity of my own heart, and can give
 “ her proofs that it is devoted to her
 “ wholly, I am indifferent about the
 “ rest.”

“ My affection alone makes me anxious
 “ for her happiness. No man loves his
 “ sister as I do mine. The man lives
 “ not who deserves her.”

“ I believe not ; but the man lives,
 “ who means to do all in his power to de-
 “ serve her—and lives in me. I honour
 “ you,

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“you, Somerville, for your attachment
“to my charming Louisa; I should be
“sorry it were ever less fervent; but
“there are other methods, and better, to
“shew your fraternal affection. Had I
“not been more influenced by my regard
“for her happiness than you were, your
“warmth might have had a dangerous
“consequence.”

“Perhaps I was too warm.”

“You were; but knowing the motive,
“I excuse it. But be assured, Somerville,
“that my heart is far from a
“divided one: it is solely my dear Louisa’s.
“The most intimate friend I have
“discovered my partiality for your amiable
“sister, even when my passion for
“Miss Denby was in its meridian. He
“used to say I had two hearts, and that
“Miss Somerville possessed one. Had I
“a thousand now, they should all be
“her’s.”

He

He signed a reconciliation directly. I hope the gentle Louisa will never know of our difference ; it would fill her tender breast with alarms.

I am more attached to her every day, from a fresh discovery of some new charm. My choice is justified by reason, prudence and discretion. With her, I can follow those plans I have formed for the regulation of my estates. She will, by her gentle equanimity, correct my sometimes too great impetuosity.

As the writings for a former occasion were not signed, they will serve very well on this. Mr. Somerville said the settlement was too large ; but I will not consent to any alteration, as I think that *etiquette* should be settled according to the fortune of the man ; and I should be extremely sorry my wife should with me lose the least degree of her rank in life.

An intimate friend of Miss Somerville's is coming to spend a little time with
her.

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her. We shall be a good deal engaged ; so if I am not so regular in the scribbling way, as I used to be, impute it to any cause but an alteration in my sentiments for you : in them I must be ever the same

HENRY MONTAGUE.

LETTER XLXIX.

To Lady HILTON.

Farm-Leigh, Sept. 6th.

MONTAGUE, I find, intends to console himself for the loss of my dear Lady Hilton, by marrying Louisa Somerville. That he is sensibly piqued at your Ladyship's desertion, is pretty apparent, from the pains he takes to convince the world he is perfectly at ease. You are too happy, I hope, to lose a thought on him ; indeed how can you find time for reflection, while surrounded with the gaieties of Scarborough ?

My father, you see, is determined not to indulge me in any thing.—To his perverse humour alone you must impute his refusal of my passing a few weeks with you, before you go to London. Well, well, he may go on as he pleases; and what will he get by it? Will he make me behave a jot better to him, or love my dear little Capel the less?

Have you heard that Caroline has had an offer from Sir Robert Falconer, and has, with the advice of her *papa*, accepted it? Much good may he do her, I say. Tho' he has four thousand a year, hang me, if I would consent to be buried in Yorkshire for life as she will be; for the knight is like one of his old oaks, fixed for ages on the same spot. Indeed such a situation will suit her better than any person I know, my wife Lady Fielding excepted.—She, you know, will always find amusement for her needle; for with
that

that she covers herself all over, like a silk-worm, Lady Bell Henley says.

A propos! her lively Ladyship says Montague's ridiculous match is soon to take place. She laughs at the credulity of Louisa, who fancies herself the object of Harry's affection, when absolutely his motive is revenge, as the silly girls call it, who, after being disappointed in their first attachment, take the first fool that offers.

By the bye, the widow is no violent advocate for matrimony; she seeks to discourage me from thinking of Capel;

“ But let her say, or let her do,

“ 'Tis a' ane to me :”

For while he loves me, and my relations persecute me, I will not forsake him.

My father had a return of his gout last week, but it soon went off. My two sisters were in great affliction; and so was I: but it was because I was afraid he would recover. O! that he was

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fairly under ground, and my fortune fixed. Then who should confine me from following the impulses of my heart, and flying to my Capel?

Adieu! My dear Hilton, I wish to Heaven I was with you; then I should live; but at present mere existence is the state of your

BARBARA LASCELLES.

L E T T E R L.

To Miss LASCELLES.

Scarborough, Sept. 12.

I AM astonished at the news you write me! Is it really true; or is it only the invention of Lady Bell, who dearly loves to give pain? Not that the intelligence can occasion the least in me, I assure you, Bab. But is it not strange? Could he ever love me,—and forget me so soon? Impressions, tho' struggled with,
are

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are not so easily effaced in a faithful bosom.—No, no ; it is as you say, Bab, he affects to appear indifferent ; and the very means he takes to convince us of his indifference, evidently proves the contrary. A look from me would quickly blast Louisa's laurels. Let her, however, enjoy her poor triumph, and fancy herself supremely happy in accepting the man I despised and left.

Bab ! I shall grow, like your widow an exclaimer against marriage. There are no two animals in the creation so opposite as a lover and husband. Even *I* find it so.

My Lord seems to think he has gained his purpose, and, that now I am his wife, there is no occasion for that tenderness of behaviour which at once made him so engaging, and gained my heart.

My heart ! no ; I recall that last expression : It won upon my self-love, but I think my heart was never touched. I

wonder whether Montague will be so indifferent to his Louisa in two months as Lord Hilton seems to me.

I long for the winter: I shall find more amusements in town than can fall within our circle here. I am tired of this place; sick to death of seeing the same faces every day.

Did I tell you I received a letter from Mr. Somerville soon after my marriage?—A *rash* one, he styles it. I hardly attended to it at the time; but the other day meeting with it, I gave it a second reading. I found several passages very severe. Indeed I must take shame to myself for falsifying my word to him; for he was by no means satisfied, till I assured him, on my honour, that Hilton was absolutely engaged to you. But what signifies duelling on this affair?—It is all over, and cannot be remedied.

The severity of his censures—and I fear the justice of them, made me rather

ther fall into the *penferoso* stile. In this situation Lord Hilton found me one morning, when he returned from the billiard-table; which avocation takes up much of his time and attention. He threw himself down in a chair, without so much as looking at me, or saying a word. I was in no humour to interrupt his silence, which continued some time: At last he broke it, by asking me, "if I knew whether Somerville was at Woodley still?"

"I don't know. Why does your Lordship ask?"

"Because I want to know where he is. I think you ought to have written to him about your fortune. Does he or you imagine I am to go on for ever supporting a wife, without receiving some equivalent?"

"You mean to return some equivalent, I hope, then, and make me an adequate settlement?"

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“Aye, aye, child! our lawyers will
“manage that affair for us. But you
“must write to your guardian, and let
“him know, in as civil a manner as possible,
“that I must have some money.”

“There is no necessity to write to Mr.
“Somerville: I had a letter from him a
“little after I married.”

“Well; and what did he say?”

“Advised me to urge you to make me
“a settlement.

“And what the devil am I to make
“the settlement out of, till I have your
“money?”

“Why, out of your estate, I suppose.
“Tho’ the lawyers, as you say, understand
“these things best.”

“Out of my estate! I must have your
“fortune to clear it first. But did old
“Somerville say nothing more about it?”
“He gave the writings and notes up
“to me, and cautioned me to be careful
“of them.”

“And

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“ And why was not I informed of this
“ before ?”

“ Because you never mentioned the
“ securing my fortune to me ; which, at
“ least, Sir, I think ought to have been
“ done.”

“ So really, Harriet, you have got
“ your fortune in your own hands ?”

“ Yes, Lord Hilton, and mean to
“ keep it there, till it is properly secured
“ from the gaming-table.”

“ Damn it ! Madam, what do you
“ mean, that I should be distressed for
“ two or three hundreds, while you have
“ thousands at your own disposal ? Have
“ I not a right to what is my own ? How
“ do you then dare to withhold my
“ right ?”

“ Your behaviour, Sir, convinces me
“ of the necessity of preserving that right
“ my guardian has vested in me. But that
“ you may not be distressed for a sum, I
“ will give you bills for five hundred

“ pounds ; and before that is expended,
 “ I hope you will be satisfied that it is
 “ for our mutual advantage to settle this
 “ affair amicably, as well as all other dif-
 “ ferences.”

I immediately fetched him the notes ;
 which he received in a manner, a few
 weeks since, I should have thought him
 incapable of. How he is changed ! O
 Bab ! would to Heaven you had never
 persuaded me to this marriage ! But you
 likewise was deceived in the specious Lord
 Hilton.

I doubt his affairs are in a very confu-
 sed way. I know not what to do ; whe-
 ther to give up my fortune, to extricate
 him from his difficulties, or to apply to
 some one for advice. However, I think
 his conduct shall be my rule of action.
 If I can discover any generosity in him, it
 shall awaken that sentiment in my bosom
 towards him ; but at present I think we
 are not in the right train. I said I would
 apply

apply to some one for advice—but alas ! to whom can I apply ? I have withdrawn myself from the protection of my best friends, and thrown myself into the power of one, who, I fear, will avail himself of that advantage, to my prejudice.

I must not, however, give myself up to gloomy melancholy. I shall positively grow quite a spectacle, if I indulge my present humour. If I am not happy at home, I will carry a smiling face abroad, by which means I shall insure flattery and conquest ; for each of which my imprudent choice has not disqualified me. No, Bab, I have the pleasure of finding I am more admired than ever ; that is the greatest pleasure that at present falls to the share of your

HARRIET HILTON.

LETTER LI.

To Miss HERBERT.

Woodley-Park, October 14.

HOW much do I miss you, my dear Emily! And how sorry am I for the occasion which carries my beloved friend far from me! But I hope you found the dangerous accounts of Mrs. Pemberton exaggerated. At her time of life the least attack of illness may be feared as the harbinger of death; but she possesses a great share of strength, and has likewise in a most eminent degree that equability of temper, which enables people to support common trials, without undermining the foundations of health—to use the expression, which we too often find in more impetuous dispositions. I have heard her often recount some very affecting passages of her life, but, though I pay a great deference to her religious philo-

philosophy, yet I must beg her pardon if I offend her, by placing much of her resignation to constitution.

I never could so ill spare you as at this time; a time to me so critical. I would not allow myself leisure to think you would leave me, till the most important article of my life was accomplished. How inexpressibly awkward I feel without you! Your lively sallies used to correct my thoughtfulness; which would sometimes uninvited steal on me. We all miss you. Mr. Montague sincerely admires you and tenderly joins with his Louisa in lamenting your absence. My brother too seems not half himself now our sprightly Emily has left us.

Ah! my dear, that fortune had not placed him in so hazardous an employ, and that my Emily Herbert beheld him with that consideration I think I see in him for her! But, as he is circumstanced;
I ought

ought not, for both your sakes, to wish you entertained the least partiality for each other. No; my Emily I hope will be blessed with a domestic mate.

Mr. Montague yesterday presented me with some very fine jewels. Ah! my dear, they were not set for me. That thought struck me the instant I saw them. A chilliness seized me; I wished never to have seen them. I think I shall never wear them with pleasure; but as I do not love finery, I shall not appear in them often. Was it not rather an unnatural petulance in me, Emily? I was angry with myself for it; but should never have pardoned it in me, if I had suffered a word or look to escape me which might have given rise to the least uneasy sensation in the breast of the most amiable of men. Ah! is he not all my fondest fancy could wish?

He leaves us to-morrow, for the tedious space of a week. It is business he says, which will divide us: no other motive,

tive, he kindly says, ever shall. To business we must submit ; and he can on that account support an absence from me ; but he should never think of enjoying what is stiled pleasure, during a separation, as by constantly wishing me to partake of it, he should destroy the very idea by sollicitude.

My sisters elect—as they kindly insist on my calling them,—have each paid me a visit. Lord Bentick was of their party.

What an additional happiness is it annexed to the heart-felt satisfaction of being united to the man of our choice, to find all his family interested so tenderly in the event ! Both the ladies express the utmost impatience to have this affair finished. Indeed I think they are by much too precipitate, and I have told them so. But they say, life is too short, and happiness too fugitive to be postponed. And Lady Chester on her part

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says, that she shall never cease regretting the many months she lost in courtship; which were so many borrowed from happiness.

Mr. Montague, you may be sure, checks not his hurrying sisters; upon my word, I believe, he rather instigates them. In short, my dear, they all seem in a most violent hurry, but your Louisa — and her gentle voice is scarcely heard in the gay multitude, or not attended to.

We are all to go and spend one week — after Mr. Montague's return — at Benthick-house; and some day in the week following, I shall no longer sign my name,

LOUISA SOMERVILLE.

L E T.

THE FINE LADY. III

LETTER LII.

To Miss HERBERT.

Woodley-park, Nov. 2.

AS Louisa and I are become one, I think I have an equal right with her to address you; and as she so recently promised obedience in all things, she ought to submit to *me* her supreme. Therefore, I would first take up the pen to tell you, yesterday you lost your friend Louisa Somerville. Yes, madam, all that remains of her now, belongs solely to me: but I will not be so atrocious a monopolizer, as not to spare you a little share in her heart; even as much as you possessed before she became a wife. Indeed I should be very sorry she should be altered in any thing but name; as she was too charming not to make every alteration prove to her disadvantage.

Oh!

Oh! what a loss will be your's! had some female hand taken up the pen, you would have been entertained with the whole proceedings of the day. But who should give you the intelligence? for your and my Louisa was too nearly concerned to give any account; and if my talent lay that way, I could only tell you my lovely wife looked like a little angel, yet it would puzzle me extremely to tell you what sort of a cap she had on, though I believe I looked on no body but her the whole day. Thus disqualified as your two correspondents are—you observe I take the liberty of including myself—I fear you must remain satisfied with only being assured that each moment of the day afforded an increase of happiness to me.

But here comes my Louisa and Lady Bentick. — Apropos! her Ladyship shall take my pen. “What for?” “Why
 “to give Miss Herbert an account of
 “yester-

“yesterday’s memorable event.” “To
 “Miss Herbert, my dear Mr. Monta-
 “gue?” “Yes, my dearest love, I have
 “just begun a correspondence with her;
 “or rather carried on your’s.”

“You amaze me.” “Indeed it is true.
 “You may read what I have written.”
 “But you can’t know what you are
 “writing while we interrupt you.” “O
 “yes! very well; I write down all you
 “say. But come my dear Maria, do
 “take my pen for a few moments: Miss
 “Herbert will be no loser by it.”

A droll kind of a letter this, madam,
 from two correspondents, only one of
 whom has the honour of your acquaint-
 ance. But, as you are the approved
 friend of my dear sister Montague, I
 am sure you are too amiable to be of-
 fended, that the first overture of friend-
 ship comes from me.

I am not however fulfilling my bro-
 ther’s commission. Indeed I think he
 should

should have excused me, as he knows the talent of description was not born with me; and unless it is, we make but a poor figure.

The day was a remarkably fine one for the time of year.—O! may the sun ever shine on relations so dear! At ten in the morning my brother was made happy in receiving the hand of the sweet, blushing Louisa, from her venerable parent. Charming old man! How benign, and how affecting his placid countenance! His fine eyes lifted up towards Heaven, and his pious lips moving in a silent prayer for blessings on his children.

Till dinner-time we spent in the park and gardens, rambling about. After a very elegant entertainment, we performed a concert, which took up good part of the evening—the rest was passed in agreeable conversation; which, among people of refinement and sense, can never prove tedious.

O! Miss

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O! Miss Herbert, what an inestimable treasure does my brother possess in his lovely wife! Indeed the whole family is the most exemplary I know. I long to be acquainted with Mrs. Montague's counterpart, as Captain Somerville informs me the lady to whom I have the honour of writing is. That pleasure I hope will soon be mine.

My brother is returned. "Come, pray resume your pen; you may see what bungling work I have made of it. Now that is abominable." Madam he says I have been telling you nothing, and that I have spent my time in vain. How discouraging to a new performer! However I have wrote the truth, though I have added no embellishments—Indeed truth requires none: among the rest, permit me, madam, to assure you I am with—
"Nay Harry, let me sign my name.
"Well, if I must not, here is the pen."
Yes,

Yes, my beloved Emily! yesterday I became the wife of the most amiable of men. I have the blessings of all my friends to make me happy: thank Heaven, their number is very extensive! I wish you were here to partake of the general felicity that reigns at Woodley-park.

My good father would have given up this seat to us; but I begged leave to decline it during his life. I had the concurrence of Mr. Montague in it; as I hope I shall in every thing I do whether of consequence or not, I am certain I shall always wish and endeavour to gain it.

My dear Mr. Montague is extremely attached to Bellefonte; it is natural he should be so to his native place. My father is likewise fonder of Woodley than of Somerville; I should be excessively sorry to deprive him of the pleasure of residing upon a spot he approves of;
when

THE FINE LADY. 117

when I could not expect to spend much time at it neither, were I to call it mine at present. We shall I hope pass some months every year at this delightful place, and knowing that it is spent in a visit to my father, will enhance the pleasure.

Our happy villagers are rather noisy in their felicitations on the marriage of their young landlady, as they stile me. Mr. Montague has begged a few indulgences for them; they are to have an annual festival or jubilee in commemoration of yesterday's event. It is a bad time of the year; but good-cheer and merry hearts will render them very joyous. Charles has joined with his new brother to institute games in honour of the day; which we have promised always to spend—if possible—at Woodley.

Do you know that four young couple begged they might be permitted to be married the same day that I was. It

was

was generally imagined they would be foremost upon the list at my next birthday; but they declared they would resign all claim to the prizes they might otherwise obtain, for the honour of dating their happiness from the same day with me. Mr. Montague was so excessively pleased at their rustic, and at the same time sincere interest in my felicity, that he bestowed twenty-five pounds on each of the brides, besides promises of future favour.

Mr. Montague and my agreeable sister will not let me proceed. I have not told you half what I meant to say. Yet, if I was to tell you all my happiness, my letter would be too large for the ordinary conveyance of the post. I must therefore conclude; but as Lady Bentick and my husband have had so large a share in the beginning, I think it is but reasonable they should take part of the conclusion.

“To you, my dear Sir, I first give
“up the pen.”

I FIND my Louisa has been informing you of the zeal of the young villagers. My promised favour is this; that the couple who produce the first child from these marriages, shall be intitled to twenty pounds—the next to fifteen, the third to ten, and the fourth to five pounds. By which gratuities none will be idle, or need despair.

Is not this a laudable scheme, my dear Miss Herbert, and doing as one would be done by? You cannot think how Louisa approves of my popular maxims. You may believe the thought was wholly her's; tho', for decency-sake, and because I thought it a good one, I adopted it.

My dear Miss Herbert, I wish you as happy as

HENRY MONTAGUE.

DO

DO not believe a word that Mr. Montague has written, except his wish for your happiness. Indeed he wants my Emily very much to take him to task.— But I beg her Ladyship's pardon; I should not have taken the pen first. As a bride, she says, she will allow me the precedence. I take this opportunity then of telling my beloved Emily how very dear she will always be to her

LOUISA MONTAGUE.

IT only remains for me, Madam, to say, that the prospect of the felicity of the above persons constitutes great part of my happiness. I wish you was a witness of it, as well as your obedient servant,

MARIA BENTICK.

L E T-

THE FINE LADY. 121

L E T T E R LIII.

To HENRY MONTAGUE, *Esq;*

Roseberry, Nov. 10th.

JOY to my Montague, on his happy espousals! May each revolving year bring him an increase of happiness! Yet how needless that wish? It must be so; for is he not united to one of the most lovely and amiable of women? My sweet Fanny is acquainted with the character and person of your charming wife.

What two happy fellows you and I are, Harry? And yet a few months since, we were cursing our stars. How much it becomes us to be thankful for the blessings with which Heaven has tinged our lives, and to repay those benefits by making them happy with whom Fate and our own choice has connected us! I am a predestinarian in nothing but matrimony: in that article I own myself a

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little

little addicted to that kind of philosophy. It is an addition to my happiness, to think it was ordained, notwithstanding it once appeared improbable that I should be the husband of Fanny Neville. It was certainly wrote in the book of Fate, that your match with Miss Denby should never take place. No ; she was born only as an instrument to bring you acquainted with your valuable Louisa, to the end that the decree of Providence might be fulfilled. Look on the fair deserter then only as an implement to forward your felicity, and pardon her on that account.

DO you remember your visit to my cottage is yet unpaid ? May I not expect the fruition of my wishes before you settle at Bellefont ? Our wives, Harry, must be better acquainted : it will be for our mutual advantage that they should, as
their

THE FINE LADY. 123

their soft cement will draw our souls in stricter bonds of friendship.

I promise you I would pay you the first visit at Woodley, where I have not the least doubt of meeting a hearty welcome; but my little Fanny is not very well, and I should not choose to hazard so long a journey at this time; and I dare say you know enough of matrimony by this time, to believe it is impossible I could quit my wife, even to meet my friend; nor would you wish to part those afunder whom God has joined. As my earnest desire of seeing your worship cannot be effected, but by your accompanying Mrs. Montague hither, I hope you will think of it, and put your thoughts in execution soon.

I wish you to see the whole oeconomy of my little cottage. I think Mrs. Montague would be charmed with the neat, tho' elegant, simplicity of the furniture, &c. The situation is extremely pleasant.

The rides and walks romantically agreeable. We live in a retired way, without seeing any company, except two or three of the most rational about us. I do not mean to give myself any airs on this occasion, by my expression of rational people; far be such arrogance from me; for in the *environs* there are many respectable families, but most of them live in a stile unsuited to us, and lead a more dissipated life than our tastes will comply with.

We spend much of our time in music; cultivating a very pretty garden; riding on horseback, or in the phaeton, for which I have as fine a pair of hunters as any in your stud. We read a good deal; so that, on the whole, our lives pass not insipidly, I assure you; for, tho' a lover of mankind, I sometimes forget the world in the society of my dear Fanny, or rather I possess the world in her.

I should

THE FINE LADY: 125

I should be apprehensive of hazarding such very *outré* sentiments to any other than my friend; nor to him, unless he were married. Great as your joys are, believe me, they will increase; and you will *own* with me the justice of Lord Lyttelton's assertion, when you have *proved* with me "how much the wife is "dearer than the bride."

I have got upon a theme inexhaustible; but it is unnecessary to dwell on it; your heart can tell you all that mine could suggest. Adieu, my dear Montague! May such happy days as we have lately seen ever fall to our share, and may we continue to deserve them!

Your's,

GEO. LENOX.

LETTER LIV.

To Mrs. MONTAGUE.

Herbert-hall, Nov. 8.

TO whom shall I first address my letter?—To the amiable husband of my sweet friend?—to the excellent Lady Bentick—or to the charming bride herself?—I am sure both the gentleman and lady love you too well, to be offended at my preference to the friend and sister of my heart.

Yet, shall their favours pass by unacknowledged and neglected? Gratitude forbid! I then too should incur the displeasure of my Louisa, for the first time.

My thanks are due to Mr. Montague, for his early intelligence of my loss; but he was mistaken: I lost not Louisa, I gained him. Lady Bentick does me great honour; but I fear I must not be very solicitous of meeting her ladyship,
left

lest I destroy the good opinion report has raised in her bosom concerning me. Captain Somerville, I am apprehensive, beholds his sister and me thro' a false medium; which detracts from her merit, and confers it undeservedly on me. I think I could give Lady Bentick such a picture of Mrs. Montague, and drawn by the hand of truth, that, instead of looking to Emily Herbert for her counterpart, she would think searching the world would be in vain.

My poor grandmother's illness happened horridly *mal a propos* just at this time. However, thank Heaven, I am repaid, by seeing her nearly recovered, and, as she kindly tells me, chiefly owing to my great care and attendance on her.

I have a great notion Herbert-hall lies in the road to Bellefont. I will consult the maps; for tho' I am a little proficient in geography; like most of our travelled fine gentlemen, I know more of foreign

parts than of my own country—so I must apply to Salmon for an answer to my enquiry.

Not much out of the road, as I live. But a step for friendship to take, for friendship wears seven league boots. Absolutely though I believe three hours with Mr. Montague's bay hunters will bring you to our mansion. I depend then on seeing you all. I cannot suppose you will travel *tête-à-tête* into the country. Our house is large enough; but if there is not room, they shall have a place in my heart; that you know to be capacious enough to take in half the world.

Upon my word my grandmother regrets my being absent from the wedding of my friend extremely. "Who knows," said she, but the old proverb might "have been verified, of one wedding producing another." She, you see, is tired of me too. Well, well, I can't help

help it. But I told her of the plan I had settled with your lord and master; which would interfere with any matrimonial scheme of my own. No; I am resolved to acquit myself of the task he assigned, for which my natural grave disposition will sufficiently qualify me: but that nothing may be wanting to render me a complete nurse and governess—as we cannot be too careful, nor should entertain too high an opinion of our own abilities,—I mean to call in the assistance of all the learned who have wrote treatises on the subject of treating and educating children. I have therefore furnished my library with Locke, Cadogan, Rousseau, Seymour, and Lady Pennington, and shall continue to make purchases of every new publication of this kind, for the advantage of Mr. Montague's offspring. I co-incide with him, in his opinion that those who do not

contribute to encrease the world, should do all in their power to amend it.

I should have been very happy though to have been present at the ceremony, which may be the means of calling forth my talents, though I have no faith in the old saying of my grandmother——Nay, who in this enlightened age, pays any attention to old grandmothers?——Besides, who could I have any chance with? There was none but General Harvey for me to play off my eye-battery upon, and he is too rough a soldier and too much accustomed to the fire of the enemy's cannon, to be consumed with my faint twinkling.—Add to this, he is a soldier; and as such prohibited goods.

Lord help the girl! what a head it has! As I am a person I had quite forgot to tell you I have kindled a flame in the breast of such a man—Why he is a man of wax, I was going to say; but I recollect,
had

had he been formed of such melting materials, he would ere this, have dissolved in his own heat.

But who do you think the features of your little Emily has warmed in this cold weather? Come, rub your eyes, and take a look at me. Not so bad I assure you. Some few attractions. — Few! upon my honour, Mrs. Montague, — you are so accustomed to see an angel's form in your glass that you undervalue the fainter charms of a mere pretty-enough-woman. Well, well; I will not send Sir Thomas Fermor to you for a description of Emily Herbert I promise you. Ah my dear! little as you may think of my charms, they must be extensive since they “could warm the cold bosom of age;” for my swain is past his grand climacteric. Now do you figure to yourself one of those odd creatures in that ridiculous scene in King Arthur, who in shivering accents and trembling

G 6

voice,

voice, addresses love by saying; "'Tis
"thou that hast warm'd us." But you
are quite mistaken; for Sir Thomas,
though sensible to the tender passion,
bids defiance to the cold season. His
dress is generally at this present month,
a white coat with silver buttons, lined
with pea-green; his waistcoat of the
same colour trimmed with silver. Ah!
what a delectable figure he is, especially
when he enters the room with a minuet
step, which he sometimes does, hum-
ming some tender air; his loss of teeth
not a little contributing to his melodious
warbling.

I wish I could repeat his first speech
when he opened his treaty of courtship.
I really thought the antiquated lover
took me for my grandmother; and sig-
nified to him that I would let her know.
Unfortunately he mistook me, likewise,
and told me he should be wretched if he
"imagined he owed the happiness of my
"hand

“hand to the interposition of any of my relations.” I stared at him, unable to speak a word. He continued, “That he adored me for my prudence in wishing to have the concurrence of my friends; but hoped they would not seek to controul my inclinations, which he was happy to see were not averse to him.” It was not in nature to withstand this; I burst into a hearty laugh and sung; “Can such an ugly creature expect to be carress’d?” His countenance, which before wore the grin of a baboon, lengthened in an instant. He rose from his chair with the alacrity of Sir Anthony Bramville; “I don’t know what you mean, Miss Herbert—if I am not so happy as to suit your taste, you ought methinks to pay some respect to my passion and years.”

“When age makes itself contemptible, Sir Thomas, it is no wonder youth should treat it with ridicule. Your
“years,

"years, Sir, would challenge respect,

"was your conduct consistent with it.

"I apologize not for my levity, which

"your absurd proposal at once excited

"and justified."

"I am sorry, Madam, I have been so

"deceived in you; and have wasted so

"much time to so little purpose."

"Had you not been egregiously mis-

"taken in yourself, you would not have

"rendered yourself obnoxious to deceit in

"me; though I am not at all conscious of

"the intention of deceiving you. I am

"sorry you should have misinterpreted the

"respect I paid your age, to an affec-

"tion for your person: in that you

"certainly deceived yourself. As to your

"wasting so much time, I think your

"whole life must have been one conti-

"nued waste, that at sixty-four you

"could possibly imagine a young girl

"of nineteen could be charmed with

"your person. Any other qualification

"you

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“you are too much of the *bon ton* to aspire to or think necessary.” — Ah! my dear, my plain dealing lost me my lover. This affair happened three days since; and I have heard nothing from him. Heaven knows what is become of the lovely youth. Perhaps he has chosen some willow to end his days;—his glass must be nearly run out.—Or perhaps he may have preferred his tender suit to some more pliant maid. Well, God speed him! I doubt I have lost him. My father wanted to have remonstrated to him the ridiculousness of his pretensions: but I think I mortified him enough. Perhaps you think I mean to mortify you with writing an age longer; but you are mistaken; I shall say no more than just to assure you how much I am your devoted

EMILY HERBERT.

L E T.

L E T T E R LV..

To Miss HERBERT.

Roseberry, Dec. 5th.

I Have this day received so great a pleasure, that I cannot help making my friend a partaker in it. We are at this time at a pretty little seat of Mr. Lenox's, a particular friend of my Montague's. When I entered the room, how great was my surprize to find myself welcomed to Roseberry by the sweet recluse I gave you the history of! and that Miss Neville should be the wife of Mr. Lenox. I recognized her instantly; she was prepared to receive me. I lifted up my hands in astonishment! "Ah! my dear "Madam!" said she, "how much have "I wished for the opportunity of embracing you!" "I am very happy," returned I, "to renew our acquaintance; and have often lamented my
"not

“not knowing your address, as I should
 “certainly have congratulated you on
 “your present felicity.” On the little
 greyhound coming in, I turned to Mr.
 Montague, and, smiling, was going to
 speak, but a look which he returned
 prevented me. I know not what his
 motive was for silencing me then, but,
 as a good wife should, obeyed my hus-
 band.

An admirer, as you have ever professed
 yourself, of Mr. Montague, how will it
 be encreased, when I explain his motive
 for stopping me, which he obligingly
 informed me of this evening!

“I was fearful, my dear creature, said
 “he, that you would have discovered
 “my having seen that little dog before,
 “and consequently been apprized of
 “Miss Neville’s retreat, when she con-
 “cealed herself from Mr. **Lenox**; which
 “circumstance I would not made have
 “known to either of them for the uni-
 verse.”

I am

“ I am very happy then I did not. But
 “ could Mr. Lenox have imagined that
 “ Miss Neville would intrust you with a
 “ secret which she would not divulge to
 “ the man she loved ?”

“ No, my love ; not so. My friend
 “ George was, from the vile extravagance
 “ of his father, extremely reduced. I even
 “ wanted to make him independent of an
 “ uncle, who possessed the most sordid
 “ mind in the world ; I don’t know what
 “ was his motive, but he would not give
 “ me that satisfaction. He was attached,
 “ from the most generous principles,
 “ to Fanny Neville, who was consigned
 “ to his care by a dying father.”——
 “ You may spare yourself the trouble of
 “ informing me, my dear Mr. Monta-
 “ gue, as I have had from Mrs. Lenox a
 “ full account of those transactions you
 “ mean to relate.”

“ When,

THE FINE LADY. 131

“ When, my dear girl ? You have
“ not had an opportunity to-day to have
“ heard it.”

“ O ! no ; but I heard it a great while
“ ago, in a letter from Miss Neville, be-
“ fore she left the farm.”—

— “ And never told your Monta-
“ gue ? ”

“ You was not my Montague then.
“ Besides, she intrusted her secret to me :
“ it was not my own.”

“ I wonder tho', when you found she
“ was engaged to a Mr. Lenox, that you
“ did not think he was the same with my
“ friend.”

“ Mr. Lenox's name throughout the
“ whole was never mentioned : she only
“ spake of a Mr. L. I own the incident
“ of the little greyhound struck me, that
“ you knew him ; as those creatures are
“ generally shy to strangers.”

“ By that happy incident, I have the
“ pleasure to find the felicity of two such
“ amiable

“ amiable people secured. Had it not
 “ been for my meeting you that day, after
 “ your return from your friendly visit,
 “ I could not have had my suspicions con-
 “ firmed, of the pretty recluse being in
 “ reality the person I wished to find, but
 “ by seeking her out, and perhaps being
 “ obliged to discover myself; which
 “ would have effectually destroyed my
 “ plan for bringing them together.
 “ Never were ten thousand pounds so
 “ well bestowed.”

O my Emily ! do you think I was not in raptures at this further proof of the worth of my dear Montague ?

Good God ! And is he mine ? Amiable best of men !

I remember his going the very next day to town, upon urgent business. An act of the most exalted generosity was the urgent business he went upon. How well he formed his plan, never to have it discovered ! What a friend he has been !

What

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What a husband have I! His virtues will call down the blessings of Heaven on all connected with him.

The dearest of men will not suffer me to write any longer; but I could not avoid giving vent to the emotions which filled my heart, on this recent instance of my happiness, in being united to such a man.

Adieu! and Good-night.

Dec. 6th.

I AM more and more charmed with Mrs. Lenox. She possesses a great share of vivacity, which, now she is happy, she indulges in a manner that gives pleasure to every one. Her little family is under the best regulation in the world. I mean to adopt some of her schemes, which I think will be of great advantage.

We

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We shall spend a few days here, then go, for a fortnight, to Bentick-house. At Christmas we return to Woodley, where we shall stay six weeks. Then we propose setting out for Bellefont. We have bespoke the seven-league boots, to enable us to step twenty miles out of our road. A pretty invitation you have given the company, to accommodate themselves in your heart! Mr. Montague says we must not be divided; so we intend taking up our lodging there. Capacious as it is, I am afraid we shall hardly find room for all the guests, as every body will be desirous of squeezing in. The mansion so invaluable, can it be wondered that every one should strive to gain a part?

Adieu, my dearest love! May I never, by any fault of mine, forfeit the share I at present possess!

Your's ever,

LOUISA MONTAGUE.

* * * Let-

* * Letters which passed to and from the respective friends for some months are omitted, as their circumstances were not of consequence enough to be inserted.

LETTER LVI.

To Miss LASCELLES.

Brook-street, Feb. 14.

Of all comfort I miscarried,
When I play'd the fool, and married.

O BAB, how truly do I verify that old song! Married in haste, and repenting at leisure; such is my situation.

Never marry, Lascelles, unless you are really in love with your husband. Love may teach you a servility of behaviour; which, tho' it may be mean, yet will conduce

duce to happiness and quiet, as it will enable you to bear and forbear.

But my haughty soul, unused to bend, cannot so easily submit to the shackles of a man I certainly never loved, and now heartily hate. His treatment of me after my marriage has not been of that kind, to engage my heart, or to have secured it, had it been previously engaged. If you mean to conciliate the thanks and good wishes of any person, never endeavour again to make up a match. Had it not been for your counsels and instigations, I should never have been the wife of Lord Hilton. But then, you will say, I had never been a Countess. True, I should not. But then I should not have been a slighted wife; and whatever maiden thoughts you and I might have had, I can assure you, it is no small mortification to receive cold insults from a man for whom we have, as Mr. Somerville says, *sacrificed so much*. Title and rank,

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rank, I find, Bab, to be but empty substitutes for peace and happiness. The last I might have enjoyed with Montague, and the first I should then have never thought of.

Lord Hilton sufficiently revenges Mr. Montague's quarrel on me. Perhaps I am but fitly recompensed for my breach of faith to him ; and I am sure I may read my crime in my punishment. Ah ! how very different are my sentiments now, to what they were some months since ? Dissipation, darling dissipation has lost its charm. The flattery of the men give me no pleasure. Their adulation I despise. I despised truth, when uttered by one of the most worthy of men. Bab ! I have never yet seen his fellow. Yet I did not love him—I am sure I did not at that time. But the character I have heard of him lately, joined to the reflections I am enabled to make in my comparisons at

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home,

home, has created sentiments in my breast unknown before.

I DID well to secure half my fortune to myself; for the other half is nearly gone, I dare say, (without the estate being cleared) in gaming, and supporting a legion of mistresses. He is always involved in difficulties, and wants me to give up part of my settlement, to put his affairs in a better train; but he labours in vain, if he thinks to gain that point of me. I find it not prudent to trust him. We now very seldom meet; nor do I wish it. He is forever out; whether he carries his discontent abroad I know not, but I am sure there is enough left at home. Tho' I endeavour to appear to take pleasure in the company by which I am for ever surrounded, yet, if I deceive them, I cannot myself. Not that I would have you to understand I wish

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wish to have the world believe that I am happily married, or that I love my husband; I care not if all the world knew to the contrary. It would, more than the flights themselves, pique me, if I thought any one could suppose I could love a man who should dare to treat me with neglect. No; let the whole universe see in how contemptible a light I behold the man my folly gave to me as a husband.

Our frequent disputes render us very unfit company to each other, either at night or day. The former I have always to myself, as, since our last grand quarrel, I have betaken myself to a separate apartment; and nothing, I am resolved, shall ever prevail on me to admit him to it. The latter he sufficiently employs himself abroad: how, or in what manner, is too trivial a circumstance for to engage my single moment's attention.

Lady Bell gives me dangerous counsel.—I have not, however, the least incli-

nation to follow it.—She vows she would pay his neglect in the same coin; yet she herself contributes to his negligence, by encouraging him to flirt with her, and ever ready to receive him at her house. Had I the least particle of affection for him, I should be horridly jealous—and not without reason, I verily believe.—But from that evil, thank Heaven! I am secured by my indifference.

I am sorry you think you have cause to complain of Capel; but fear indeed your apprehensions are not groundless. He is the bosom particular of his Lordship;—no recommendation with me, Bab, whatever it may be with you. I am sure he will do him no good. Yet you should not blame him for his backwardness in bringing your affair to a conclusion; for what but immediate ruin could be the consequence of your union? You know how very much your father is irritated against him, whether by the instigations
of

of your sisters, or by the *cavalier* treatment he received from him, I know not : but a reconciliation, should you marry, must never be hoped for ; and without that, you have no chance of living. He, you know, has nothing he can call his own, besides his commission ; for as to his patrimony, which was slender enough at first, that has been mortgaged a long time, and the produce dissipated at White's. A melancholy picture this would be in matrimony ! I wish, Bab, you would see it in a proper point of view. I counsel you against matrimony, for your advantage, and because I would have you happy. You counselled me to marry, I followed the advice, and shall never cease to repent it.

Would to Heaven I had not married ! Many years swing of pleasure might I have enjoyed—idolized by the men, envied by the women, and the admiration of all, had I not been so foolishly precipitate. If,

as at that time, I did not like Mr. Montague, I might afterwards have met with a man capable of making me happy; but vanity, consummate vanity, was my ruin. That indeed has been gratified, but at the expence of all prospect of happiness.

Yours,

HARRIET HILTON.

LETTER LVII.

To Miss LASCELLES.

Grosvenor-street, May 12th.

THE most inconsistent of all inconsistencies is that same Lady Hilton. She raves against the gay indifference of her Lord, yet protests she despises him too much to lose a thought on him. He sometimes too, brings his complaints along with him; but I threaten

threaten to banish him from my house; if he entertains me with so dull a subject as a wife. Ah! she is a fool. I always told her to marry Montague and coquet with Hilton. But she chose to follow your advice, and rejected that I offered; though she knew I had been shackled, and consequently must have been acquainted with the sacred mysteries of wedlock.

She is still very much the fashion! which is a very substantial reason for my not appearing often with her in public: for as to outward form, I must confess she is my superior; but then, if I but deign to speak, I might e'en from the bidding of the Gods command all the beaus in the circle.

So Bab! I find you think I keep your Capel from you? Poor thing! And is it jealous? Well, I swear I am sorry.— But who can help it? Would you have me veil my beauties in endless night,

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because they are acknowledged as often as seen? Indeed, Bab, I cannot prevent your swain, and every body's swain, being sensible of my charms and wit. If they will follow me I cannot help it. My doors are always open to people of fashion, and if such happen to be your lover, or Lady Hilton's husband, or the lovers and husbands of half the world, am I to blame? How strange you are grown. Do you think when a tender speech full of soft nonsense is addressed to me, I stop the speaker short, to enquire whether he is the lover or husband of any of my acquaintances?—Not Bell Henley I assure you. Love has no colour, complexion, size, voice or features. I hear it from every man—and from every man it is welcome. So none of your yawn-creating sentences I beseech you, about the sacredness of friendship and such stuff. If you or any woman in England thinks to secure such a pretty fellow

fellow as Capel to herself, she will in the end prove herself woefully mistaken—that's all. I tell you once for all you are a simpleton, ever to think of him in the way of, for better and for worse. Why don't you contrive to get married to some such humdrum as my dear cousin Lord Fielding, or Sir Robert Falconer—then whisk up to town and Capel is your own. Let me give you this plain bit of advice; you want to be thought a *little esprit*—a woman of the world; you risk your sentiments in all companies—or rather my sentiments, which Lady Formal calls licentious: this Bab! tho' it may suit me, will not you: you are young, single, and not of sufficient consequence at present to secure yourself from censure. It is a rock many a girl has split on, The men are afraid to venture on a female who professes to wish herself married that she may enjoy liberty free from control. In a word,

my dear Bab! you are too honest. Reform then, my girl, and try to catch a man who may be able to allow you a good separate maintenance—if you should not play your cards too discreetly to be detected. You must alter your plan I assure you, and that quickly, or you will be in danger of wearing a willow-garland.

Your true Friend,

ISABELLA HENLY.

LETTER LVIII.

To GEORGE LENOX *Esq.*

Bellefont, Nov. 5th

I Begin to taste the beauties of your last letter, which I think may be stiled an elegant panegerick on your little boy. We are making preparations for my dear Louisa's removal to London, to present
me

me, I hope, with such a pledge of our happiness. O George! What anxiety do I feel on this approaching occasion. I sometimes gaze on her 'till I am obliged to turn my full eyes away, that they may not by their sensibility alarm her. Would to God the time was come, and happily over! she is herself very desirous of continuing here. "God is every where she stays, and can preserve her here as well as in town." I agree with her as to the omnipresence of the Almighty; but Doctor Ford is not here;—and I cannot consent to trust a life so valuable in any other hands. How valuable indeed!

Faith George! I find my passion unabated—unabated! it is stronger than ever it was. Her charms increase every day—Her winning softness—gentle disposition, and tender affection, endear her to me more and more. O Lenox! and must the time soon arrive when her

precious life will be in danger? The reflection harrows up my soul. I must not think of it: if I do, my present moment of joy will be embittered with the future prospect.

THE dear girl is herself out of spirits. I had written myself into the vapors as the women call them, and sought out my love to ease my anxious mind; I found her exceedingly melancholy. I endeavoured to divert her, but could not remove her pensiveness or prevent a silent tear—the first she has ever shed since matrimony—from stealing down her lovely cheek. “My Louisa! my “angel!” cried I, folding my arms round her, “what mean those tears?”

“Pardon me, my dearest Mr. Montague; they are only the effects of low “spirits.”

“It is a reflection on me my love, to “permit you to be low spirited. Come, “come, I must exert the husband, and
 “banish

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“banish every care from your dear breast.”

She sighed. “Give me that sigh Louisa.” She faintly smiled, and shook her head. “Won’t you then tell me why you sighed?”

“I was thinking where in a month’s time I might be?”

“In London, you will be my love.”

“O Montague!” Melting into tears, “I may by that time be in my grave.”

“Do not be angry with me Mr. Montague; but even the bare probability of a separation from you causes me inexpressible anguish. Blest as I am, how could I part from you?”

“My dearest girl, I would reason you out of your fears were they not in themselves unreasonable. But still giving way to them may endanger your health. I hope, my sweet love, we have very many happy years to live e’er we sink into the grave: and that the Almighty will first take me to his care.” “Heaven forbid!” cried

she

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she eagerly, "O God grant I may be
"the first that pays the debt of nature?"

"Well, well," cried I smiling, "we are
"neither of us in haste. But why do
"you so earnestly pray to leave me be-
"hind you?"

"What should I do on earth when
"you were gone? — Heaven, and its
"joys alone, could only recompense me
"for the loss I should sustain in being se-
"parated from you. How great must
"be its happiness if it is greater than I
"have tasted since I have been your's."

I thought her too serious—Her words
and the solemn air which accompanied
them affected me; I however stifled the
tender emotion, and smiling told her;
"If Heaven would grant our petition,
"we should certainly request the same
"favour with Baucis and Philemon,
"and be transformed into two old yew-
"trees." "Upon my word!" continued
I surveying her, "if the transformation

" was

“was to take effect at this moment, you
 “would make a prodigious stately plant.
 “But we should be soon obliged to call
 “the aid of Lucina to bring my little
 “Adonis into the light. Pray, my dear,
 “where would you please to grow?”

“In your heart, my dear Montague;
 “where I would flourish for ever.”

I had but just time to thank her in a
 fond embrace, when we were inter-
 rupted by some company.

The beginning of next week we set
 out for town. Heaven send us a good
 journey! And a safe return, my dear
 Louisa would rejoin; for she is exces-
 sively attached to this place.

You cannot imagine in what forward-
 ness our new town is. The school-house
 is nearly finished. The plan is a more
 enlarged one than that at Woodley. My
 connection with this angelic creature has
 not only made me a happy but a good
 man.

man. Encouraged by her sweet example, I find myself better every day.

Next summer I hope I shall be favoured with the company of you and your amiable Fanny. Little George must be of your party.—You would not easily pardon me if I was to leave him out of the invitation: besides, he must be a companion to my little fellow or fellows whatever it may be. Our nursery is very commodious I assure you, and fit to receive us. I suppose you and I shall be missing every now-and-then; and after strict search we shall be discovered dandling our respective bantlings, and singing lull-a-bye to the little squalling rogues. Hang me, if I do not think we shall find pleasure from the employ. You do at present I presume. Well I must learn from you and nature to be a tender father. It will not be the first good thing you have taught

HENRY MONTAGUE.

L E T.

LETTER LIX.

To GEORGE LENOX *Esq.*

Park-street, Nov. 21st.

O George! the time is come that is to make me the happiest or most wretched of men! My Louisa! Ah how dear! is taken ill.—And attended by the Doctor.

Four o'clock.

Rejoice with me! All is safe, thank Heaven! My love, my life, is restored to me. Joy is too great to be expressed. I am mad with joy.

By my soul! I forgot to ask what I am father to; whether a child or a cream-cheese of which she was fond during her pregnancy. I never once thought about it: so happy was I to hear my beloved was safe. But now it has popt in my head, I must satisfy my

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my curiosity, for at present I find it pretty predominant.

A boy, by Jupiter! and lovely as a sleeping Cupid.—His enchanting mother I have just seen. I pressed her charming lips, and received a gentle smile.

Mr. Somerville and Charles are below—I must go and congratulate them on my—and their happiness.

Adieu!

Your's,

HENRY MONTAGUE.

L E T T E R L X.

To Miss HERBERT.

Park-street, Dec. 14th.

I DEDICATE the first tribute of returning health to my beloved Emily. O my dear, that you were here, to be witness of my happiness! To see my
lovely

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lovely little boy too—You cannot think what a little cherub it is.—And then my amiable Montague is so fond of him.—You would be delighted to see him, when he assumes the character of a nurse; and the smiling infant seems sensible of the extreme joy expressive in his father's countenance.

What an addition to our happiness is the presence of this little-one! How trifling is the remembrance of my sufferings, when I behold the consequences, and see the before-unequalled tenderness of the best of men still increasing! He sits whole hours with me. How kind! how considerate! And yet how seldom are men thus kind, thus considerate? He racks his invention to scheme plans for my amusement. He succeeds in every thing; for what a disposition must that be, which is not pleased from the kind endeavours of those who love us?

I am

I am called upon already. My Montague is apprehensive that writing at present may be prejudicial. Ah! he has brought an advocate which cannot fail: My sweet Harry! Yes, my little-one, for thee I will stop my pen, and bid you adieu.

LOUISA MONTAGUE.

LETTER LXI.

To Miss LASCELLES.

Brook-street, Dec. 30th.

O Lascelles! your last letter robbed me of every idea of happiness. Yet, if there was the least remaining, this day has overwhelmed it; I have seen him! Yes, Bab, have seen him with her—with his beloved Louisa.—I was airing in the park—they were doing the same; the first time since her lying-in. I plainly saw them in their post-chaise.

chaife. His arm was round her waist; and his eyes, which were fixed on her's, beamed with the most ardent love. He even lifted her hand to his lips.—Half-distracted at the sight of their felicity, I returned home—to a home which is now become a hell to me.

But are they then so blest as Lady Fielding paints their situation?—Is he so tender a husband? But why do I ask? Have not mine eyes seen them happy? Oh that they had instantly closed in death! I know not what to do—or where to go.—Miserable Harriet! undone by thy own folly! All the happiness I have been a mournful spectator of, I might have enjoyed—enjoyed with Montague. O Montague! dear loved Montague! what have I not lost by my own rash stupidity? My heart, ever insensible before, is now enslaved by a hopeless passion. Yes, Bab, I feel now the force of love. Oh! what

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what would I not give, to have felt the same sentiment in the day of happiness!—Now what is left me, but to moan and lament thro' a life of endless misery, like the arch-deceiver of old.

I must see him again—tho' to see him, will be planting daggers in my breast.

Adieu!

HARRIET HILTON.

L E T T E R LXII.

To GEORGE LENOX *Esq.*

Park-street, Feb. 10th.

YOUR friend is going to metamorphose himself into a Grand Signior to-night. We are going to the masquerade at Soho. My Louisa was never present at one of these midnight revels; tho' it is not on her account we go, as you know she is not attached to any public places—and I believe this, of all others,

others, will be least pleasing to her gentle disposition. But this is to be a very superb one—and so we go to join the motley throng.

My sweet girl goes as a *fille de Patmos*. The simplicity and innocence of that character, I think, will best suit the delicacy of her manners—ininitely better, I am sure it will, than most of the dresses our ladies of fashion assume.

Charles goes as a Roman senator—Lady Bentick a Persian slave—Lord Bentick and Lady Chester in rich Domino's—Ned Bentick as a scaramouch ;—and now I think I have told you all. I had rather pass a sober evening with you in Leicester-fields, with our two amiable wives, but it must be otherwise.

I won't write any further:—Indeed I cannot ; as my Louisa has just begged I would give her my opinion about part of her dress. Adieu !

Feb.

Feb. 11th.

GOOD God, what an encounter have I had ! Would to Heaven I had not gone to this cursed masquerade ! But take the particulars.

We entered into the spirit of the place. Louisa too expressed more satisfaction than I expected, from the novelty of the amusement.

About twelve, I began to grow tired ; and having a severe head-ach, from the heat of the great room, I went into one of the small one's below stairs. There happened to be no body there, except a very elegant Calista, whom I had remarked to follow our party the whole evening. I threw myself on a sofa, without paying the least attention to the mask, who walked backwards and forwards several times. At last she stopped, directly before me, fixing her eyes on me, and fetched a deep sigh. " Are you repent-
ing

ing of your sins?" asked I, induced by the liberty of the place. "I do indeed repent of the injury I have done you," she answered, in a tremulous voice. "Done me? You mistake me, I fancy."

"No, it is impossible I could be deceived in you—My heart directed me to Montague."

"Then you know me."

"I do." And looking round her, to see if any one was approaching, "I would unmask, but dare not, lest when you see me"—

"By Heavens!" cried I, seizing her hands, "you shall unmask." She trembled so, I was apprehensive she would faint. "Why this agitation, Madam?" "Come, come, I must see your face, and know how you have injured me."

"Then pity and forgive me," cried she, dropping her mask, and discovering to my astonished view the features of the faithless Lady Hilton. I started at the

sight of her, and could not at that time command utterance. O George, what an object she was!—Think you behold her kneeling at my feet;—her mourning weeds setting off the brilliancy of her complexion; her fine hair falling gracefully on one side of the loveliest neck in the world—her charming hands clasped and lifted up, with streaming eyes, to me. Thus was the fair penitent situated. I endeavoured to raise her, not without some emotion on my part; but she refused to change her posture, till I had pronounced her pardon. “Never, never have I known an hour of joy since I basely deserted you, for the most worthless of men. Soon, I hope, shall I be numbered with the dead.—What is there in life worth living for? I am too late become sensible of your inexpressible worthiness. O Montague! Montague! But I am deservedly punished in your hatred.”

“For Heaven’s sake, Lady Hilton, rise.—You will be taken notice of.—I hear some one coming.—Indeed you

"have my pardon:—I forget you ever injured me."

"Oh! will you restore me to your esteem?—Then I will rise, and rise happy." I placed her on the sofa by me. "I am sorry to find your ladyship is not happy in your marriage. I do assure you I have ever wished you should."

"O! you are too good. I have a thousand things to say to you.—And— we are interrupted.—O Montague! dear amiable Montague! kill me not with a refusal," cried she, taking me by the hand, which she honoured with a gentle pressure; "if your pardon is sincere, refuse me not."

"What would you require of me?"

"To see you to-morrow evening, for half an hour, in Brook-street.—I must see you.—Something of consequence I have to unfold."

"I know not how."

—"You must, you must," she cried, in agony. "The future peace of my life depends on your indulging me."

By this time the room began to fill, which they all do in turn. I had not time to answer her. She shot from me instantly, and I saw her no more.

Would to Heaven I had not seen her! Her presence recalls to my heart a thousand disturbances I thought long since extinct. I have ever carefully avoided her. Why did we meet? I continued in a state of stupidity, till roused from it by the voice of my gentle Louisa; who, in the mildest accents, told me she had been seeking me. I pressed her dear hand, but was too unsettled to enter into conversation. The rest of our party joined us, and dragged me into the other rooms. My eyes sought the apparition which had so lately appeared to them, but in vain.

The ladies complained of being tired, and wished to be at home. I seconded their motion. As soon as we could get to our carriages, we left this perhaps fatal place. Yet why so? Where is the danger to a right mind? A good heart is always secure.

We

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We were engaged to spend this evening in Berkeley-square, as it is the birthday of Charles. I however must put off my engagement. A little dissimulation I must use, which my soul abhors.—But yet 'tis necessary. I cannot repel the curiosity of knowing what Lady Hilton has to unfold.—Yet fear not, Lenox. Her perfidy, joined to the excellencies of my angelic Louisa, will arm my heart against her charms.

I HAVE just told my wife I could not accompany her to her father's.

“Theirs then will be the loss, my dear
 “Mr. Montague. But as it has been an
 “engagement of a long standing”——
 “you think I should make some reasonable excuse, my love. Tell Charles,
 “I wish him all happiness; but that I am
 “prevented assuring him of my wishes in
 “person, by an unlucky engagement
 “which I formed last night. I will, however, be with you at supper.—I dare
 “say I shall be able.”——

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“But lest you should not, I had better
“be silent as to the latter part of your
“message. My brother, I am sure, will
“readily excuse you.”

“But will you, my love? Tho’ I as-
“sure you I will fetch you home.”

“Put yourself to no inconvenience, my
“dear creature, I beg of you. I shall
“not stay late, as yesterday was a fa-
“tiguish day.”

This affair is then settled; and at
seven, being the appointed hour, I go
to Brook-street.

In the mean time your’s,

HENRY MONTAGUE.

L E T T E R LXIII.

To HENRY MONTAGUE, *Esq;*

Leicester-fields, Feb. 11th.
Half past Five.

MY dearest Harry, what are you
about to do? Good God! can
you really mean to go to Brook-street? I
hope

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hope my intreaties will prevail on you to stay at home, or attend your wife to her father's.

Can you, O Montague! can you consent to injure your amiable Louisa, which I much fear will be the case, if you persist in the fatal resolution of visiting the artful Lady Hilton? Such she certainly is, to the highest degree. What purpose is it to answer? Why should she be so solicitous to receive your pardon? Oh! Harry, she means your destruction.

I cannot write any farther, lest my mail should not reach you time enough to prevent the impending danger. But let me beg of you, if you have the least regard for me, your deserving wife, your lovely infant, and your own honour and happiness, to lay your intentions aside. Do, my dear Harry, reflect what the fatal consequences may be.

Your's sincerely,

GEO. LENOX.

LETTER LXIV.

To GEORGE LENOX, *Esq*;

Park-street, Feb. 12.

IF I had received your note in time, I will not flatter you that it would have had the desired effect; so confident was I in the firmness of my own soul, and what I owed my wife. But let never man, after me, boast of his strength of resolution.—If he does, he will prove the same weak creature I have done.

O that I could recall the past hours! And yet, vainly trusting to my own heart, I should again fall.

Curiosity, you know, was my plea; at least I flattered myself there was no other motive. I went to satisfy that curiosity—and, like our first parent, was lost.

I entered the fatal house about seven, and was introduced with some degree of secret caution to——by what name shall I call her?—I found her sitting in a melancholy posture on a sofa; her dress
ele

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elegantly negligent. A blush overspread her fine face, and a trembling seized her, when I approached her.

She made a motion to me to sit down : I did by her. I was not very well able to interrupt a silence which was in itself awful. Without speaking a word, she burst into tears. Overcome with the affecting sight, I seized her hand, and, eagerly pressing it, demanded the cause.

"You hate me, Montague," cried she, turning her swimming eyes on me ;
"you hate me, notwithstanding your
"pity has brought you here."

"You do me wrong, Lady Hilten.
"Can you think it possible I should hate
"you ? No ; a desire of being service-
"able to you has brought me here."

"Oh ! Montague, you see before you
"the most miserable of her sex ;—made
"so by by her own unsurmountable folly.
"Doomed for ever to be wretched, and
"deservedly doomed, for slighting the
"most valuable of men. But you are
"sufficiently revenged."

"I am extremely concerned to hear
 " Lord Hilton makes so ill a return for
 " the favour you shewed him. I was in
 " hopes you would have been happier
 " with the man of your own choice."
 " Ah! call him not so. I cannot bear
 " you should labour under so gross an
 " error. No, he was not the man of my
 " choice.—I was drawn in by the subtlety
 " of Miss Lascelles to countenance him.
 " I had then never known what it was to
 " love any man. My heart was choaked
 " up with seeds of vanity.—He nou-
 " rished my foible more than you did.
 " My heart had never been sensible to
 " the soft delights of love. Ah! that
 " it were not now! for he is lost to me,
 " and I to him! Now here my only
 " comfort lies. On this loved image
 " do I fix my thoughts, because, when
 " it was drawn, it was for the woman
 " beloved by you."—During the latter
 end of her speech, she drew up a rib-
 band which was tied round her neck,
 and hung down her bosom; but, replac-
 ing it instantly, continued;—"But there,
 " thou

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"thou loved resemblance, thou shalt remain."

"May I not see it," asked I smiling. With the most bewitching look, she answered, "I dare not." "Nay then I will see it;" said I. She endeavoured to prevent me; a tender struggle ensued.—Her hands, her neck were now at my liberty.—O Lenox! thus tempted, is it wonderful I should fall? Each seducing—each seduced,—in a moment we were both undone. Oh! what guilty transport fired our souls! Neither could blame the other. Yet on my knees I besought her pardon. "Equally blest and equally unhappy, Montague, are we." "But Oh! do not," cried she—her hands clasped, "do not despise me."

O George! we could not fall lower; at least our enraptured senses told us we could not, and we swallowed guilty draughts of love. At last we separated.—But who shall describe my sensations when I entered my own doors? Guilt, conscious guilt glowed on my cheek. It was a relief to me to hear my wife—my

injured wife, was not returned. Your letter presented itself to my view. I perused it and detested myself. Oh! that I could yet follow your counsel! but I am plunged deep in vice—and must I call it by so harsh a name?—How did I use to wish the lovely Harriet's heart was sensible to love.—It is, — and from thence proceeds my misery. Yet I must repay the sacrifice she has made me with ingratitude or neglect.—Yes! I must see her once more; but I will only see her. We will meet as friends.

I sat musing, my head resting on my arms till past eleven, when I was roused by the rap of Mrs. Montague's servant. She entered the room, and, from my altered looks and situation, judged I was ill. In the most tender manner, she wanted to prescribe something for me. How did her unmerited goodness cut me to the soul! I longed to clasp her to my bosom to thank her—but could not, when I reflected how lately I had pressed another. I begged her to go to bed, whither I would quickly follow. She
intreated

intreated I would first go to rest, and that she would procure me somewhat which might do me good—and watch by me. She pressed my hands—with fondness.—Those instances of affection which I used to receive with pleasure, were now bitter reproaches. However, I complied with her request, and first retired—but not to rest. Guilt had driven all rest from my eye-lids. The dear Louisa tried every method to sooth me. To rid me of importunities, which now were painful, I feigned myself to be asleep. She at length fell into a real slumber; sweet, peaceful and innocent as her spotless soul;—while I spent the long tedious night in self-condemnation and soul-harrowing reflections. The rising day brought no return of happiness to me. A heavy gloomy weight presses down my spirits. But I must be careful not to give the least rise to suspicions. My Louisa shall never discover the most minute alteration in my conduct towards her. No; she will ever be the object of my esteem and admiration. Oh Lenox! your assertion
of

of my having two hearts is certainly true. How otherwise could two passions reign in my breast at one time? And of a truth I am in that strange predicament. My veneration, esteem and tenderness for Louisa is still the same it ever was, and my love and desire towards Harriet, the dear destructive Harriet, hardly knows any bounds. Ah! must charms like her's, next to divine, inspire a guilty passion? And must the matchless worth of Louisa be lost on an adulterer? Fatal truth! Horrid thought! O George! what a situation is your friend's! At enmity with himself.—Lost in his own opinion.—Can I hope you will still remember with affection, your

HENRY MONTAGUE.

L E T T E R L X V.

To GEORGE LENOX *Esq.*

Park-street, Feb. 184

SURE as *Bellcour* says, “no man
“ever sinned with more repentance,
“or repented with so little amendment

“as

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“as I do.” I make good resolutions only to break them. I cannot avoid running into temptation, and the evil is sure to find me.

Your excellent letter, my dear George, might have had some weight on a man not wholly lost, as I fear I am.* For though I know and see my folly—to call it by no harsher name,—I cannot relinquish it.

Whenever I quit my unhappy companion in guilt, I make the strongest resolutions never again to fall; but ah! how weak my resolves when opposed to the tender proofs she daily gives of her affection! Such softness! such melting fondness! sure never woman could evince as she has done:—nor could any man be so sensible of them, as I am. When I clasp her in my arms, I am almost ready to exclaim, with Lord Grey; “this enchanting creature should not be loved at a less expence than destruction.” O! the raptures she gives will atone for an eternity of pain. It is more than mortal bliss.

*Mr. Lenox's Letter does not appear.

But

But my Louisa.—Be not apprehensive for her.—I will do her strict justice. She shall never have cause to complain. They who know not they are robbed lose nothing. I never can behave with less tenderness than I have done by her. Ah! does she not deserve all that man can bestow? But I cannot give up my transporting Harriet: at least not yet. I am young at present in enjoyment of the greatest raptures man can taste. She is ten thousand-times more lovely than ever. Such seducing smiles!—Such winning caresses she bestows! Ah! call her not artful or designing; she is all love.

Yet, George, I will freely own I wish I had never seen her; or that I could have been proof against her soul-fascinating charms. But to gaze, to love and be undone, was one and the same thing.

You are I find going into the country. I join in your wish that I had never left it. How strange and inconsistent a creature is that compound animal man! and your friend one of the most strange of his

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his sex! I hate vice and pursue it;—love virtue and fly it.—I, who never committed an irregularity, which youth is incident to, without great compunction, to launch at once so deep in the most flagrant of crimes!—But I dare not, must not dwell on that thought.—Adieu.

HENRY MONTAGUE.

L E T T E R LXVI.

To Miss HERBERT.

Park-street, Feb. 25:

YOUR last letter, my dearest Emily, crushed the hope your former inspired, that I should have the pleasure of embracing you this winter in London. Cruel girl! and yet you tell me the fault is not your own. I think, had you been hearty in your request, your good father would have complied with your desire; and I should have been gratified with your company. I have not the least doubt of your affection to me. Strange! if I should, you will say, and ungrateful too! yet, my dear, am I
mistaken

mistaken when I say, I think you have sometimes shewn a backwardness when I have pressed your coming hither? Perhaps my surmises have no foundation in reality; but you know friendship is sometimes jealous.

My little boy grows quite an angel; nor has he had a day's illness since his birth. I hope you are gaining all the knowledge you can from your newly-furnished library, for his advantage. I am training him up in the way you would have him go—that you may have as little trouble as possible with your charge.

They laugh at me for trying to discover his father's features; but I do assure you, I think there is a very perceptible resemblance between them. My dear Montague has not for some days been in his usual spirits. A slight indisposition I hope occasions it. I shall not be sorry when the time comes for our leaving London. Indeed I wished not to come; nor would I, but from the excess of tender apprehension in my beloved husband. My

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My brother has left town to join his regiment at Dorchester.—Do you think he will not steal out to see a certain young lady for the sake of his sister? The distance you know is not more than forty miles. To oblige me—not to say one word of himself—Charles will think that space nothing.

It is a bad time of the year to go into the country; and I could wish, for my own sake, he remained in London as long as we shall. How long that will be I know not. I am afraid I shall lose my amiable Mrs. Lenox soon, as their uncle is ill—and wishes to see them at Oak-hill. I wish he could dispense with their attendance:—but in that wish, I fear I am selfish too.

Would you think it, Lady Bell Henley came to pay me a visit. If I could have excused myself without appearing rude, I really believe I should not have returned her favour. But as she is very much engaged, and I seldom go out—there will be little danger of our going further than visiting our respective knockers. A
species

species of murdering time I cannot easily reconcile myself to;—but fashionable customs must be complied with sometimes.

I have been at a masquerade. You would not perhaps have expected to have heard of me at such a place. I was not charmed with it by any means. I do not think it a diversion calculated for the naturally-sober genius of the English. But I will not say any thing against an amusement that is quite the *ton*—because it will be absurd to oppose my opinion to so many hundreds who take a visible pleasure in the gay scene—And because, though I dislike it myself, I should be very happy to attend you to one that is to-night—or to any other place, as all places with you in company, would be highly agreeable and pleasant to your faithful

LOUISA MONTAGUE.

L E T-

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LETTER LXVII.

To HENRY MONTAGUE *Esq.*

Oak-hill, March 25th.

O My friend! my amiable Montague! why will you still be deluded by that syren? Why will you not arm yourself with resolution to quit destructive London? Flight alone can save you from further ruin.

My heart is too full to write on this—or indeed any other---subject.—I have just discovered what has till this day been so carefully concealed—that I am indebted to you for so many months happiness with my lovely Fanny. She is at this moment weeping at my side, and lamenting with me, that such a man as Montague should not be wholly perfect. But one failing; and can you not my friend, my dearest Harry, relinquish that one? Why did you not permit me to force you from a place destructive to your present and future peace?

You depend on your amiable Louisa's never discovering your fatal connexion.

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—How can you be secure she may not make that discovery?—Your altered looks——your frequent dejection of spirits, must raise some degrees of suspicion, though she is too delicate to hint them to you. O Montague! never shall I forget the agony you once shewed, when you exclaimed to me;—“Lenox! “my dear Lenox! Maria was too grateful; and we are both undone.” This was your expression, when accident and the fire of youth had betrayed you into the commission of a crime trivial when compared to this, which you now persist in. You both were equally culpable and unfortunate. You know the unhappy Maria never reproached you.—“Why “should I, Mr. Lenox,” said she to me one day “upbraid the man whom fatal “opportunity and a generous tenderness “seduced? I do not complain of him. “He would make me reparation by ruining himself.—I cannot consent to it.—“No; shall I repay the anguish which I “have contributed to plant in his generous bosom, with basely drawing him “in to fulfill engagements he never “made?

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“made? I have no claim on him—I
 “have no right to the bounty he has
 “ever bestowed on me.——Much
 “longer I hope I shall not need it:——
 “Yet while I do live, I will not, I will
 “not wound his soul by refusing to be
 “supported by him.——Too much,
 “too much pain have I unwillingly
 “caused him already.” How long was
 it, my dear Harry, before you could
 forgive yourself the only irregularity
 I ever knew you guilty of! And can
 the man of five-and-twenty fall into a
 vice of the deepest die, when the youth
 of nineteen could so sensibly lament a
 small deviation from virtue? Oh! my
 Montague! my friend! rouse yourself,
 nor be overcome with a shameful passion.
 Fly, fly far from the fascinating charms
 that at present enslave you. Think
 what you owe the best of wives and
 women!—Think what you owe your-
 self and God.——

I cannot, my dear Harry, repay my
 obligations to you in a more effectual
 manner, than by urging you to shun
 the

the pleasing mischief which allures you to your destruction. How inexpressibly happy should I be, if I could prevail on you to break through this fatal connection! If I could see you restored to virtue and peace:—for abandoning one—the other must inevitably be a stranger to your breast. I know it is; felicity is stolen from you.——You are not the man you was.——How should you? The heart, which once never knew a thought which heaven and earth might not have witnessed, is now, by one fatal step, and an unhappy perseverance in doing wrong, compelled to disguise its once noble feelings——Constrained to feign a passion, it is not incapacitated from the commission of a crime to feel in reality and “living a lie.”——And must my noble, my generous friend be reduced to this dreadful state?——Undergo this amazing change? Oh! Montague! it cuts me to the soul. My affection to you is stronger in proportion to the pity your unhappy situation demands

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mands of me. I condemn—yet must
ever love you. Your faithful friend,

GEORGE LENOX.

L E T T E R LXVIII.

To GEORGE LENOX Esq.

Park-street, Mar. 30th.

AH! am I not sufficiently wretched,
that my friend must tear open those
wounds which the hard fate of the un-
happy Maria caused in my bosom, by
bringing her to my memory? Ill-fated
Maria! thou knowest I would freely
have made thee every recompence in
my power. I would publicly have re-
paired those injuries which were sustained
by thee in private.—But the delicately-
generous girl refused my offered hand.
She would not, she said, consent to my
undoing.—No gentler term would she
afford an union with her. Her crime,
she said, was involuntary, and from re-
pentance she might hope to be forgiven;
but if she yielded to my sollicitation to
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become my wife, the baseness of the act would deservedly draw down the wrath of Heaven upon her.

Poor unhappy Maria! What tears have I shed to thy memory! Rest thee in thy peaceful grave!—

Lenox, I find myself more and more involved in perplexing error. Peace, as you justly say, is indeed a stranger to the heart which has revolted from virtue. How severely do I feel myself punished, for my desertion from the right path!—O that I could regain it!—But it is impossible. Two months ago, how happy was I! Now, how very, very wretched! Yet do not say I am compelled to feign a passion for my wife:—Indeed I am not. My tenderness, and veneration of her heavenly character, rise in proportion to my consciousness of not deserving to possess such excellence. How calm, how serene my days glided on, while I lived the life of angels with my amiable Louisa at Bellefont! Why has a fatal prepossession dashed the cup of happiness from my lip, and made me both guilty and miserable? Companions
they

they must certainly ever be in my unhappy bosom.

While fondly gazing on my inestimable wife, my whole heart in my eyes, could I have believed an angel from heaven, that had told me I should break my vows—which were ever so sacred with me—and live in a state of infamy and vice? Should I not have answered with Hazael, “Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” How deceitful is the human heart! How difficult self-knowledge!

I thought myself secure; I yielded to temptation, and am overwhelmed in ruin.

I am sure the best of women, as you justly stile Louisa, has not the least suspicion of my unhappy infidelity. Artless and ingenuous, as I have ever found her, I must have perceived the traces of it on her countenance or actions. No—she knows not on how despicable a creature she reposes her happiness.

Harriet is no more happy than myself. Every proof that we give or receive

of our unfortunate loves is an additional anguish to us. Last night we resolved to see each other no more. Tears and repeated sighs burst from our aching bosoms. I clasped her for the last time, as I thought, to my anxious breast; but in that embrace forgot our resolutions, and was again undone.

“ Oh my Harriet !” I cried, “ you see
 “ how very weak are my efforts of vir-
 “ tue !—Assist me, thou dear unfortu-
 “ nate partner of my guilt, assist me,
 “ with all the helps thou can’st assume.
 “ O Louisa ! Harriet ! How is my tor-
 “ tured heart divided between you !”

“ But think, my Montague, what she
 “ possesses, in loving *you* without a
 “ crime ! She can look into her own soul,
 “ and behold spotless innocence, even if
 “ she sees herself deprived of her hus-
 “ band’s heart : but when I turn my eyes
 “ inward—what do I behold ? guilt, re-
 “ morse, anguish, and love—increasing
 “ love. Can she refuse us the small relief
 “ of pouring out our souls, in mutually
 “ regretting our unhappiness ? Can she,
 “ my

" my adored Montague, grudge me the
 " poor comfort of hearing you hourly
 " repeat your deep repentance, for hav-
 " ing yielded to my fatal passion—and
 " cursing the moment you first saw me?
 " Is not our torch of love dimmed by
 " tears and sighs? Is there an anguish
 " which rends the heart of my Montague,
 " that is not multiplied in his Harriet's
 " bosom? What has he lost, which she
 " has not to deplore? And will you for
 " ever quit a wretch, which you and love
 " have contributed to render so?—
 " leave her to the agonizing reflections,
 " that she has ruined your peace of mind,
 " and undone herself?—What cruel
 " power can demand so great, so hard a
 " sacrifice? All I ask of you is pity;
 " and to be sometimes allowed to pour
 " out the afflictions of my soul before
 " you!—And can you, can you, my ge-
 " nerous, lovely Montague, deny me this?
 " Kill me, even at this moment that I
 " press you to my beating bosom, kill
 " me, and rid yourself of your greatest
 " enemy."

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O Lenox! could I then abandon her to the ruin I have unhappily led into?—If I ought—I could not. Narrow are our circles of happiness!—Fleeting and fugitive our pleasures!—Unhappy Harriet!—Ill-fated, criminal Montague! We have gone too far to recede.—And our everlasting ruin is sealed, both here and hereafter. Adieu! I am too much affected with my situation, to go on at present.

—
 Envy me not the small share I had in contributing to your happiness.—Thank God, it was in my power! Vile as I am, I would do all, and every thing, to ensure the felicity of those I love. Dear Lenox, my affection for you is always the same, and will remain so while I am

HENRY MONTAGUE.

L E T T E R L X I X .

To GEORGE LENOX *Esq.*

Park-street, April 14th.

AN affair has happened here, which has thrown us in sad disaster and afflict-

affliction. No other than the death of General Harley ; a very worthy man, but unhappily possessing too great a warmth of temper. A dispute concerning politics arose at a tavern, where he was at dinner, between him and another officer. Both heated with wine, and positive in their several opinions, high words passed ; a challenge was given, and accepted. The offered mediation of friends was disregarded, and in all the passion of resentment they left the company. The next morning they met in Hyde-park. General Harley received two balls at the first fire. His antagonist is likewise wounded, and there is but little prospect of his living, to stand a trial. Thus have these unhappy men deprived the world of two worthy members of society, and their country and friends of ornaments.

The poor General lived two days in excessive torture. He had time to settle his worldly concerns ; and intreated his nephew and heir not to continue longer in a profession which obliges a man to

take the life of another; or lose his own, or else be stigmatized for cowardice, and broke. This unhappy circumstance has thrown our whole family into great distress. They would have lamented him as a man of worth, and a dear relation, but the manner of his death doubles their affliction.

We were entirely ignorant of this affair till it was all over. My wife and I were at Mr. Somerville's, where we proposed staying dinner. We had been there but a small space of time, when the General's man came hastily into the room, and abruptly told the whole story. I could almost have wished him in the same condition; for the suddenness of the news, and the melancholy purport of it, threw my poor Louisa into a fainting fit. I flew to her assistance, and supported her in my arms. While she was insensible, I was almost distracted. The reflection that I had once beheld her in this situation, owing to her excess of tenderness for me, obtruded on my memory. My tears fell on her agitated bosom. I

was

was nearly rendered incapable of using the necessary endeavours to restore her, from the violence of my sufferings. Drops, &c. and fresh air, at length brought her quite to, and a copious flood of tears relieved her. She fixed her eyes with so much tenderness on me, when she first recovered, as almost overcame me. My assiduities seemed to affect her extremely. Why should they?—She has been ever used to have her wishes prevented by my care and attention.

O George! I do still love her—I feel I am unworthy of possessing so amiable a creature.—Would to Heaven I had never beheld any other with passion! Still does the fatal—guilty—connexion continue: and still it must; for I cannot break the chain which binds me to her; nor can I—dare I, pierce the heart which is already too much oppressed. Her death, I am convinced, would be the consequence of my desertion: I must not add murder to my weight of sins.

Oh that, instead of General Harley,
the cold grave could to-morrow receive
the unhappy, guilty

HENRY MONTAGUE.

LETTER LXX.

To Miss HERBERT.

Park-street, April 14th.

OH, my dearest Emily, what a fatal accident has happened! My poor uncle General Harley is no more—Killed in a duel, occasioned by an unhappy difference at a tavern with Colonel Pitt.—He too is dangerously wounded. What a melancholy event is this for your poor Louisa to be witness to! unable at all times to bear great afflictions—and now—But, my dear, perhaps you would wish to know particulars; but indeed I am not at present able to inform you, I am too much affected.

I was told very abruptly of the misfortune of my dear uncle; so suddenly, as to occasion me to faint. Good God!

how

how tender was Mr. Montague's behaviour to me ! I could hardly have expected it.—No, no, it could not be affected.—The tears he shed on my bosom were real.—But whither has my pen hurried me ? Oh ! I meant not that even you, the sharer and partner of all my thoughts, should discover that I suspected the least alteration in my husband. Yet, as I have inadvertently disclosed part of the secret, and that I know I may confide in your faithful bosom all my griefs,—I will disclose to you all the emotions of my sad heart.

Yes, my Emily, I fear the time is come—if ever he really loved me—that my husband has withdrawn his affections. Yet, ought I to blame him ?—Alas ! is he not to be pitied ? I told you I had been at a masquerade ; but I told you not that Lady Hilton was there. I endeavoured to forget she was there. My Montague saw her ; I know he did, and spoke to her, tho' he never mentioned her name to me. O Emily ! he has never ceased to love her. His sentiments for me were only pity, esteem, and compassion.

Yet I am, I will be silent.—Not a look shall escape me. And tho' I see him unhappy and dejected, I will attribute that change to any other cause than the true one. Dear unfortunate Montague, how sincerely do I pity the situation of thy amiable heart! And must so good a man as he once was be lost?—Must his generous bosom be filled with a guilty passion? Ah! how my heart bleeds for him!—and oh! my friend, for myself! Good God! am I then no longer dear to him!—I correct myself.—His tenderness is still eminently conspicuous. He seems to take pains to prevent my every wish.—Ah! Emily, the seeming to take pains destroys the pleasure we should otherwise receive, from the assiduity of those we love. Would to Heaven I could give relief to his noble heart!—But that even my death could not effect, as she too is engaged. How unhappy for us all, that she did not sooner become sensible of a tender passion for Mr. Montague! Time might have reconciled me to thoughts of never more beholding him;—or the knowledge of
his

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his being truly happy might have satisfied me.—Then might he have indulged a constant passion without a crime.—Then should I have escaped the misery of beholding the man I fondly—still fondly—doat on, involved in sin and wretchedness. O! my dearest Emily, you know not what I daily endure. Yet I keep my thoughts and anxiety to myself, lest my poor Montague should suspect I know the whole of this unhappy lapse; and likewise for fear my father or brother should discover I am uneasy. For the universe, I would not have you entertain the least surmise of there being the least alteration in my Montague. My Montague! Emily, he is not mine.—I only share his name, while another robs me of his heart.

My only consolation is in the nursery. There I spend long tedious hours, weeping and caressing the beloved image of the dearest of men by turns. My dearest Emily, sorrow flows in so fast on my soul, I must give it vent. Adieu!

LOUISA MONTAGUE.

L E T.

LETTER LXXI.

To Miss HERBERT.

Park-Street, April 29.

THANK Heaven! my brother has disposed of his commission. My poor uncle, when dying, requested him not to continue in the army any longer. The prospect of death shewed him the fallacy of his former opinions:—opinions which cost him his life. My dear Charles may now hope to be happy. He made a discovery to me of his secret wishes; which I own I have long suspected, but would not for the world hint to any one—as it could answer no purpose: for had the General still lived, and retained his passion for a soldier's life, Charles must have been the same, and consequently must not have indulged that hope, which now he may, without any very material obstacle, entertain. But I shall say no more on this head.

Ah my dear Emily! I cannot help reverting to the old story. My whole
soul

soul is taken up with the fatal connexion my husband has formed. So exemplary as his conduct has ever been! So good in every character of life—and thus to fall! But I must not indulge my unhappy propensity of complaining. I must strive to repel the gloomy ideas which envelop my soul. Any alteration in my behaviour might incense him, and deprive me of that tender esteem he yet professes for me. He affects to be gay and cheerful; but I too plainly see the effort is painful to him.

The night before last I went, at the instances of our sisters, to Ranelagh. You know we are at present in mourning for the General. My dress was a watered-tabby French-grey, trimmed with a narrow silver edging, with black lace sleeve-knots, &c. My head ornamented with some jets and black lace, and without powder. I should not have spent this time in particularizing my garments, but that my dear Montague was pleased with my appearance. “My sweet “Louisa,” said he, surveying me, “how
 3 “elegant

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"elegant you look! Your person never
 "appeared more charming!"

"I am always happy, my dear Mr.
 "Montague, when you approve of
 "me!"

"Then you must be happy at all
 "times, my dear; for I cannot but ap-
 "prove of you always." He pressed
 my hand so tenderly while he spoke,—
 looked so much like what he used to be,
 when I was happy in possessing his heart,
 that I was excessively affected. I turned
 from him to conceal the tears which
 rushed into my eyes. His behaviour the
 whole evening was, to the last degree,
 affectionate and tender. While we were
 walking in the room, Mr. Montague,
 on saying something, took my hand,
 and, still holding it, put it through his
 arm. His attention delighted me. My
 joy however met some allay, by my
 distinguishing Lady Hilron in the
 throng. She passed pretty near us. I
 would not look towards my husband,
 lest I should discover emotions in his
 countenance. I wished not to behold
 but

but I could not forbear glancing at her. She perceived me look at her. Her eyes met mine—perhaps their regards were meant for my husband. She made me a curtsy, with a look of humble deference. “Damn her dissembling humility!” exclaimed my brother, who was on the other side of me. Mr. Montague turned sharply upon him. I trembled for fear he should say something rash, which might, knowing the warmth of both, have a very bad consequence. I instantly diverted his attention happily to some other object in the room. But though I prevented any altercation between persons so dear to me, I could not divest myself of some very disagreeable reflections which my brother’s exclamation occasioned. I was wretchedly apprehensive, that Charles had made a discovery, which I would not have him acquainted with for the universe. Of what use would his knowing the real situation of Mr. Montague’s heart be? On the contrary, it must be productive of the greatest of misfortunes to me. An
inevitable

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inevitable quarrel would ensue.—And which party could I take? Miserable on both sides!—No—let the knowledge of his infidelity rest in my bosom.

My tenderness and forbearance may perhaps one day restore him to me. Yet, let my sufferings be ever so extreme, or painful to be supported, I will not justify his desertion by fruitless complaints.—Fruitless I doubt they would prove. Ah! my dear Emily! how enchanting I thought the cruel spoiler of my happiness looked! How fascinating her charms! I am determined, however, to think on her, or the misery she occasions me, as little as possible—Alas! I cannot at all times prescribe rules to my thoughts—but I can to my pen;—which I will hold only to assure you, how much I am always your faithful friend,

LOUISA MONTAGUE.

L E T.

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LETTER LXXII.

To Miss HERBERT.

Park-Street, May 5.

MY Emily! The friend of my heart will be my sister! O my beloved! how I thank you for not keeping my brother in suspense! Long have I known his secret attachment; but, circumstanced as you both were, I thought it would have been highly improper ever to hint it to you;—or even to encourage that esteem I knew you professed for him. How often have I checked my pen and tongue, when they have been ready to recount my dear brother's praise, lest I should, by placing him in the amiable light in which he appeared to me, increase your partiality, and lay a foundation for uneasiness in the breast of my dearest Emily! Now every obstacle is removed; and I shall have the felicity of seeing the happiness of the best of brothers, and the best of friends, secured to them in the manner
most

most acceptable to myself. Our attachments from this union will be doubly cemented. I shall love you more than ever, for the sake of my brother—and my affectionate regard for him will increase from the connexion he will form with you.

Did I raise some emotions in your breast by some passages in my last letter? Will you forgive me for creating a little uneasiness? I thought you would not be able to act with so much native ingenuity, if you had been apprized of my brother's sentiments before he made the soft confession.

I wish, my love, it was in my power to comply with your desires—and my own inclination I am sure:—But you must not expect to see Mr. Montague and me at Herbert-hall.—You know my heart well enough to believe I should be very happy to attend Charles on so agreeable an errand,—abstracted from my desire of quitting town. But I must comply with my husband's will. He says it is impossible yet for him to leave London,
having

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having some business of a very perplexing nature. Indeed I believe him.—Perplexing enough he finds it: for it robs his days of comfort, and his nights of repose.

You, my Emily, will be happy.—No Lady Hilton, with artful blandishments, to draw your husband's affections from you. You are my brother's first, his only love. He is impelled by the tenderest of all passions, to make you the offer of his heart; while I fear Mr. Montague's affection for me was of a more compound nature:—pique and resentment against a woman who had basely deserted him, and a desire of appearing wholly indifferent—esteem and compassion for me, and a regard for my family: these were the sources of his sentiments for me. I sometimes think he never loved me at all. But have I not said so before?—Ah! pardon me, Emily, I hardly know what I say—or what I do. My mind is torn and agitated by a thousand conflicting passions. How great!—how severe my struggles!

I do

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I do not express to you the tenth part of the anguish I hourly endure. — Why should I? — I should only make you uneasy without giving the least relief to myself. Nay, I should rather add to my afflictions by that method, as I should then feel for the share of unhappiness I had occasioned in you. Adieu! my dearest Emily, may you be as happy as I wish you!

My brother proposes setting off early in next week. Of that however, I presume his letter, which accompanies this, will inform you. But let me intreat of you, my amiable friend, by all our past affection, never in an unguarded hour of tender confidence with Charles, to drop the least hint of my train of affairs. I have my doubts, that he suspects something. — He may endeavour to gain some intelligence from you: — but oh! if I was ever dear to my Emily, be cautious and silent. Let my unhappy husband's crimes be buried in your faithful bosom. If my brother
should

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should interrogate you concerning me, or let fall the least innuendo, deny your knowledge of it.—Affirm, it cannot be so—as you are convinced, I should have mentioned it to you. Tell him I always write in good spirits—but let him not see this blistered paper—blistered by the tears of apprehension.—The deception, my dear, will be justified by the motive. Remember, it is for my everlasting peace I solicit you to conceal from my brother the unhappy state of your

LOUISA MONTAGUE.

LETTER LXXIII.

To Mrs. MONTAGUE.

Herbert-Hall, May 15.

AMIDST the joys which surround me, my heart returns to the recollection of my beloved Louisa's distress, and vents its sorrows in sighs and tears. You so pathetically mourn your hard fate—and yet I am sure you restrain your griefs—that I feel them all for you. Ah, my dear! can I be
assured

assured no Lady Hilton may hereafter make me wretched? Some such insidious betrayer may draw as keen anguish from my breast, as that fyren does at this instant from your's. I almost tremble at the idea of putting it in any man's power to make me miserable. But your brother has ever borne so good a character. He is a compassionate man; and our revered *Sterne* says, "a man whose soul is actuated by that principle must be a friend of mankind. He cannot do hurt to any one: with such a man we might trust our fortune, our wife or daughter, with him they must be safe;—he could not injure any one, because the sufferings of another must create pain in himself." Such is the sentiment of that great and noble philanthropist—but I have not done justice to his expressions, as I only quote from memory. Ah, my Louisa! how ready are we to find out excuses for our own actions! Might not these remarks have been made on Mr. Montague? Undoubtedly his character was stamped with this virtue. It was his being the
most

most amiable of men you distinguished him from all men.

Would to Heaven I could use any consoling arguments, which might serve to lighten your weight of woe, or enable you to bear it calmly. But what can I say? I know the gentleness and inestimable worth of your heart so well, as to be certain, were Mr. Montague indifferent to you—Could you from a consciousness of his indefect cease to love him?—you would sincerely mourn for his defection from virtue. It would be a grief to you, that such a man as he once was, should not be in the right road to attain everlasting happiness.

No—be assured, my dearest Mrs. Montague, for your sake I will never give the least intimation of your situation to Charles. It shall be the only secret I will ever conceal from him—but that fatal one shall be sacred. I do not think he suspects things have gone so far as you, my dear, apprehend they are. But do not perplex yourself with what may happen.—You have too much already,

to need searching into future for further evils.

I wish you could by any means have prevailed on Mr. Montague to have left town. Strange, that he can be so much attached to that artful creature! By what methods could she have drawn him in?—But I must not dwell on this topic.

How does my sweet little charge? I long to commence tutoress. Your brother is in raptures with him. I tell him, I fear he will contribute to make my task harder; for he owns he helps to spoil him. I shall certainly forbid Charles the nursery.

I must accustom myself to a more respectable manner of speaking of my intended husband than I at present use. *Charles* no more; but *Mr. Somerville*; as I extremely dislike hearing wives call their husbands *Dicky* or *Tommy*, as two or three of our country ladies do their looberly spouses.

I am prevented scribbling farther by my *Somerville*—I fear that sounds too tender—by your brother then, requesting me to
take

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take a walk. But indeed calling him *your* brother is calling him every thing dear to

EMILY HERBERT.

LETTER LXXIV.

To Miss HERBERT.

Park-Street, May 20.

HOW acceptable to me are the proofs I receive of my beloved Emily's esteem and the knowledge that she will soon be happy with my dear brother! How does that prospect console me for my disappointments! Once I thought myself supremely happy in possessing the friendship and esteem of Mr. Montague—and yet now I am convinced I possess no more, how dissatisfied I am! Is it because I think I have a right to more? If only that be the case, surely I am not to be blamed. If I am, I am very culpable.

Last night his behaviour was uncommonly tender. He spent the whole evening with me. How precious did the time appear while blessed with his company! I was a little indisposed in the

—morning; and he was so kind as to break thro' an engagement, that I might not be left alone.

When we retired for the night, I told him, "I feared he had had but a dull day." "Don't say so, my love," said he, "unless you have discovered by my behaviour that I thought so. Believe me, I never spend my time so much to my own satisfaction as when with you. Would to God I could spend it all with you!" He sighed while he concluded. I took no notice of his sighing; I thought it better not—as he might have been distressed by my importunity—and he feels too much anxiety for me to wish to encrease it. Indeed in his endearments I almost forgot my former uneasiness. The tranquillity which he seemed to enjoy communicated itself to me. For many weeks I have not known so much ease of heart.

This morning, coming down to breakfast, and not finding him in the parlour, I sought him in the library. He was writing. I begged I might not disturb him. He desired I would stay an instant, and he

he would attend me. I passed by the table to take a seat. I am sure I did not intend looking on the paper, and yet I cast my eyes on it. I caught a few words—They made me sigh gently: I hope my poor Montague did not observe me. No—he was too attentive to his subject. It was to Mr. Lenox he was writing I believe; had it been to the cruel interrupter of our peace, he would not have used such expressions:—“Fatal
 “delusion! why cannot I break the
 “guilty chain!” Ah! my dearest love! why canst thou not break it indeed? She has certainly entangled him so fast he cannot extricate himself. He makes efforts, but then they are too weak opposed to her charms of seduction. Oh! that I may ever see him free from the fascinating wiles of the artful syren, as you justly call her, with what raptures shall I fold him in my arms!

Did he join ill treatment to his infidelity, it might possibly awaken in my soul some degree of resentment—but of that he is incapable. No, my Emily! his whole behaviour is so touchingly tender!

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—Yet can any mode of outward behaviour recompence me for the loss of his inestimable heart?—Oh! none, none. All blessings without that cease to be blessings. And am I deprived, really deprived of that blessing? The question is too keen. O Emily! my tears can only answer it. Adieu!

LOUISA MONTAGUE.

LETTER LXXV.

To GEORGE LENOX, *Esq.*

Park-Street, May 20.

WAS I in a situation to derive happiness from any source, I think I might participate in that which my amiable Louisa feels on the approaching felicity of her brother.

Miss Herbert, with a frankness which does honour to her, has received Charles as a lover. You know the obstacle which prevented Somerville from disclosing his secret attachment; that now being removed, the happiest prospect awaits them.

Oh,

Oh, may he never be cursed with inconstancy!

I have thought of your advice a thousand times. Yet could I make the humiliating confession to my injured Louisa, the opportunity does not present itself—nor am I able to make one. I spent the whole day with her yesterday. How long it is since I have passed so many hours without room for regrets! Ever amiable—she appeared yesterday doubly so. I put off an engagement I had formed, to devote myself wholly to her. How calm, how innocently serene the whole day passed!

She was apprehensive the hours had not passed so pleasantly as she wished. I was hurt by the reflection—and could not conceal my *chagrin*: it broke forth in sighs.—Ah! had she urged me on the cause of my sighing—I think I should have cast myself at her feet, and poured out my whole sad soul before her. Her counsel, her sweet consoling methods might have soothed my melancholy; and perhaps might have enabled me to burst the bonds which have so firm-

ly enslaved me. But instead of interrogatories, soft endearments,—endearments, of which I have fatally rendered myself unworthy—were the only weapons she opposed to combat the dejection, which in spite of myself seized me. Fired by the delicacy and fervency of her affection, I clasped her to my bosom—and in those charming moments forgot my infidelity and the cause of it. My heart, accustomed to beat to guilty raptures, was now filled with the purest and most glowing passion for the best of women. With what content and pleasing reflections I rose this morning! I thought I had gained a conquest over myself. Virtue, I cried, has compleated its victory over vice. No more shall I spend the nights in restless anguish, and curse the return of day. I entered my library.—And the first object that met my eyes was a billet from Lady Hilton. Ah, cruel invader of my peace! Base mandate!—Yet I must obey thee. O Lenox, how weak—how vain my resolves! Oh! this cursed infatuation! I think I am firm when I resolve to see her

no

no more. I find pleasure from the conviction that I am doing right. I paint her to myself in all her charms:—tho' thou art exquisitely lovely, I cry,—for that thy enemies must allow thee—thou must, thou shalt be sacrificed to virtue, and my amiable Louisa. Yes, I will give thee up.—I will tear myself from vice, although it wears the most enchanting form. —See my prudent, my virtuous resolutions overturned by a few lines from the woman I have just sworn to renounce. *Fatal delusion! Why cannot I break the guilty chain!* Why is my heart—once good—thus torn by conflicting passions? Thus divided by esteem and tenderness for the most amiable of wives, and a guilty passion for a too beautiful mistress? I own with you she has no superiority over my gentle Louisa, but that exterior, which she owes to accident. But, Lenox, she was the first object of my love. My heart was long accustomed to look on her as my better angel.—She abandoned me.—Yet for her desertion there was some extenuation to be made, at least such as ap-

peared a justification to her. She has been miserable.—She is at present unfortunate. If she injured me, think what an atonement she has made!—Sacrificed every thing to love and me. Yet do I seek arguments against her.—I strive to forget her. I think I have gained my purpose. I swear to renounce her. Nay, we mutually agree to part.—We bid each other so many tender adieus, that insensibly we find ourselves locked in each other's arms, and in the midst of our virtuous resolutions see ourselves criminal.—But here comes my wife. Oh, that to redeem the wrongs I have offered that excellence, I could lay down my life! It is now, from the circumstances of it, become odious to me. Dreadful as the prospect of the next world appears, I could rather bear it, than the heavenly smile that this instant plays on Louisa's features, and by its reproach pierces my inmost soul. Adieu! my dear George! How happy is your Fanny compared to my injured wife!—And ah! how blessed are you in conscious innocence and rec-

—I hope I am happy and well! —
 Louisa

titude of heart! while how cursed, how
very cursed is your

HENRY MONTAGUE!

L E T T E R LXXVI.

To GEORGE LENOX *Esq.*

Park-street, June 22d.

NOW George! what is to become
of your friend? Merciful God!
am I not sufficiently plunged in guilt
and wretchedness, but I must lift up
my arm against the man I have injured?
Yes! Lenox, I must meet Lord Hilton!
My unhappy connexion with Harriet is
detected. Oh! that I had assumed cou-
rage sometime ago to disclose my situa-
tion to Louisa! I have not a doubt—
it would be injuring her to raise one—
but that her forgiveness would have fol-
lowed my confession. And, after such
a confession, had I fallen, I had been the
most execrable of villains.

But to come to particulars:—Lord Hil-
ton by some means had discovered, what
our own fakes, we had endeavoured to
conceal. I saw him last night as I quit-

ted his house. I could not be ignorant of his suspicions on such a *rencountre*. This morning I received this billet:—

Sir,

I formerly robbed you of an unfaithful mistress—You have retaliated, and dishonoured my wife. Perhaps in the eye of strict justice I was the aggressor; but the revenge you have taken counterballances the prior injury. I am debased through the licentious passion of an infamous woman.—You, who have done the wrong, may repair it. If with the betrayer of the marriage-vow—the defiler of the marriage-bed, you do not likewise unite in your character the coward and the villain, you will meet tomorrow, in Hyde-park at six o'clock,

HILTON.

—No, Lenox; I am no coward, nor yet a hardened villain. But I tremble at the thought of embruining my hands in blood, or perhaps rushing precipitately into the presence of a just God. Yet, shall I who dare to injure a man—a husband in the tenderest point, shall I not dare give him the only satisfaction he requires?—

But

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But is my life at my own disposal? Ah! if it were, there would be no need of Hilton's lifting up his enraged arm against this hated existence——Myself should do that deed. But honour, custom, decrees that he should risk his safety, and expose his life to the man who has wronged him.——The same inducements call on me:—and whatever repugnance or compunction I feel, the cry of honour and custom must be complied with.

I sent his Lordship this answer:

My Lord,

I seek not to exculpate myself. It argues not who was the first aggressor. Mutually we have offended; mutually will we seek redress. But as the issue of our rencounter is in the breast of Fate, I could wish a little more time allowed us to settle our affairs, that those who weep for us may not be obliged to mingle distress with their tears. I hope, my Lord, I may alter the time appointed, without incurring the imputation of cowardice. My motive is our mutual advantage. I disclaim the tittle of villain:

at

at least Lord Hilton should not call me such; if I am so, it is he who made me so.—Had he not robbed me of a mistress, who but for him had not been unfaithful, his wife would not have been dishonoured.

The morning after the next day, I will meet you at six o'clock in Hyde-park.—The weapons, if you please, shall be fwords—I know myself so good a marksman, that it would be a degree of baseness, of which I am ignorant, was I to choose pistols.

I remain, My Lord &c.

HENRY MONTAGUE.

The short time between this and our meeting—which on one side can only precede eternity, and that may as likely be on mine as Lord Hilton's,—I must employ in settling my worldly concerns. I intend now making my will, which I have not done since the birth of my little boy.—O Lenox! there the father melts me!—His mother too! amiable, deserving Louisa! that pang is for thee. The unhappy Harriet, undone, distracted!

with

with not one consoling virtuous thought to gleam on thy darkened soul! The immediate cause of death to either her husband or the man ruined by her loveliness! And thou too, my dear, my respectable friend! will this be the last letter I shall dedicate to thee? The last proof of an affection which can but end with my life? O Lenox! that I had never deviated from thy virtuous rules! that I had never fallen!--But these lamentations are fruitless and cowardly.—

I know not how to break off this intercourse with you. It being perhaps the last time I shall ever be so employed, urges me to pursue the task—and blinds my eyes with tears of tenderness and remorse.—Remorse, that I have proved myself so very unworthy of those who truly loved me.

Commend me to your virtuous, amiable wife.—Pray for me. I hardly dare put up a petition for myself. Adieu!--perhaps, perhaps, my Lenox,---for ever!

HENRY MONTAGUE.

L E T.

LETTER LXXVII.

To GEORGE LENOX Esq.

Park-street, June 3d.

A Few lines more to my dear George before the fatal morrow. I have settled my affairs in such a manner as I hope will give least trouble to my survivors, if I fall. My will I send with this letter. By virtue of it my unhappy wife will be entitled to half my estate for her life; with the absolute disposal of her own fortune;—which may enable her to make perhaps a more prudent choice, than she unfortunately did in me. The rest, I leave to my poor little boy. I hope he will not be bred up to curse his wretched father: Yet---if he knows my history, and feels his amiable mother's worth, as I at this moment do—and have never ceased to do—must he not execrate the memory of a man who has imbittered her life?---I have left some legacies.—The rest of my personal effects I leave to the child yet unborn, whether male or female. Its un-

fortunate mother will have it in her power to do more for it. This plan takes effect, if the hand of Lord Hilton prevails. If fortune shall favour me, I have settled my affairs in this manner: Deeds are executed as to the disposition of my fortune, much in the same way as above; only that I have reserved to myself the sum of five hundred pounds a year; with which income I mean to drag on a hated existence, far removed from those who made me once happy, and I have rendered for ever miserable. Think not, Lennox, that after fighting in the defence of a crime, I would ever approach my injured wife.—No, I see her this day for the last time. Great God! what anguish rends my heart, when I tell myself I will see her no more! Yet it must, it shall be so.

To the unhappy author of this mischief and sorrow I have written, to take an eternal farewell. If she can enjoy peace in this world, may it be her's! May she have time to repent the crimes which a too great share of love, and too little virtue, have drawn her in to commit!—

commit!—Heaven knows with what grief I think of the guilty scene into which I have plunged! My breast is torn with the keenest remorse. Deep is my repentance.—I have not the least animosity against any one in the world but myself. I look on Lord Hilton as an instrument of Heaven to punish me; and I meet him without hope of surviving.—But I have one task more.—O Lenox! how shall I go thro' it?—I must take leave of my wife—my Louisa! How shall I speak comfort to her wounded soul?—How tell her I will never again behold her, and yet tell her that resolution proceeds from my tenderness? What a task!—But it will be the last assigned me.

Once more, my amiable Lenox,—companion of my happier days—farewel! Oh! may we meet again in the blissful mansions of heaven! Yet, can I hope? God is merciful—but he is likewise just. I tremble at the idea of appearing before my judge. Marked as the latter months of my life have been with guilt, dare I hope?—But my despair will disable me from the mournful task I must undertake
of

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of writing to my wretched Louisa. When she reads the letter, I hope the unfortunate guilty writer will be no more. My death alone can cancel the injuries she has sustained.—May she soon forget me!—I cannot however bear the thought that she should hate my memory; yet, have I not merited her hate? Adieu, my dearest George!

HENRY MONTAGUE.

To Miss HERBERT.

Park-street, June 4th.
Five o'clock.

I KNOW not what to do with myself. I am full of a thousand apprehensions, without being able to assign the real cause of them. Good God! if I were to give way to my fears, what would become of me? I must tell you what has called me up thus early, and has filled my bosom with dreadful forebodings.

These two days my poor Montague has been more than commonly melancholy. As he has lately spent more of his time with me than has been usual since

since the commencement of his unfortunate connexion, I was, and still am, in hopes he is on the point of breaking off with the vile seducer. I have endeavoured not to take notice of his dejection, lest he should imagine I suspected the cause. I would not raise a blush on his cheek for the world. He is unfortunate, and I sincerely commiserate his situation.

Last night I supped in Berkeley-square. I staid merely to please my father, who is, thank Heaven, much better than we could have expected, from the time we were obliged to send for Charles. When I returned, which was about eleven, I asked if Mr. Montague was at home. Robert informed me he was in the library. I went to him.—He sat in a dejected posture.—Alarmed at the appearance he made, I tenderly enquired after his health. He told me he was not very well, and was rather busy in settling some affairs. Begged I would excuse him—and sighed deeply. I sighed in my turn; but as it appeared he had rather be alone, I ceased to importune him, and prepared myself for bed.

I lay,

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I lay, unable to sleep, waiting for his coming. After the clock struck one, I heard him come up. I thought, if I remained as if I had not been asleep, it would look like a kind of reproach to him for keeping me awake; I therefore lay very still, in hopes he would conclude I really was asleep. He opened the curtain—looked on me some time—then closed it, uttering a heavy sigh. He then placed himself in a chair by the bedside, with an intent of undressing himself, as I thought; but he continued there a long time. Apprehensive he might take cold, I pretended to wake; and putting back the curtain, “My love,” said I, “will you not come to bed? You complained of not being well; you take not the method of being so. Come,” continued I, rising, and pressing his hand,—“let your Louisa prevail on you to come and take some rest. You will be better after a night’s sleep.”

“I fear not,” answered he, sighing, “but yet I will take your counsel.” He came into bed. His melancholy countenance

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tenance pierced my heart. " My Montague," cried I, " you seem in distress. May not your true friend share it with you ?" " Mine," replied he, " is of such a nature, as I would not wish you to share. Whatever has been happy in my life I have communicated to you." " And why may I not partake of the rest ?" " Have you, Louisa,"—and he looked stedfastly on me— " have you never concealed an uneasiness from me ?" " I doubt I have ;" answered I, with a sigh. " Then do not blame me, my love, in this instance. You will soon know whatever of distress that has lately passed in my bosom, but not to-night ; and when you know them, they will have ceased. It is late, my dear Louisa, and I wish you to seek repose, as I will do." He embraced and kissed me several times.—We wished each other a good night—and I endeavoured to obey his desire. At last balmy sleep overtook my weary eye-lids.—Yet, would to Heaven it had not ! for waking about four—and not hearing Mr. Montague breathe,—

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I put out my arm, but he was gone. I jumped up in terror.—He was not in the room.—My pillow and bosom were wet with tears.—They must have fallen from the beloved eyes of my Montague ! Without knowing what I did, I rung the bell ; and, leaping out of bed, began dressing myself. In a little time Nelson came into my room. “ What is the matter, Madam ?—Is my master ill ? ” “ I know not,” cried I, gasping, half out of breath ; “ he is gone, Nelson ! ”—But recollecting it is imprudent to discover the state of our hearts to servants, I checked myself,—and added, rather more calmly, “ I believe he is gone out for a walk—and I could not rest in bed. However, Nelson, I do not want you yet.” “ My dear Madam,” said she, “ let me prevail on you to go to bed ; it is very early.” To prevent her suspicions, I assumed as serene an air as possible ; in which persuasion she left me. But, my Emily, I cannot speak peace and calmness to my mind. I shall soon, he says, know his distress—and then it will cease. Were not those his words ?

words? Does not that seem to imply he will make me a full *confidante* of his unfortunate engagement, and that my pardon will remove his distress? Can he doubt my forgiveness? Ah! he knows not the heart of his Louisa.

What's here?—A letter.—My God! What is the meaning of this?

Mr. SOMERVILLE to Miss HERBERT.

Seven o'clock.

I WRITE to you, my dearest Emily, instead of my poor sister. If she was capable at present, the subject would be too melancholy for her to pen.

Good God, to what a hard trial is that angel called!

Montague is a villain. Ah! my beloved Emily, why did you not confess to me all you knew of this cursed affair with the infamous Harriet? A false tenderness to my unhappy Louisa has perhaps undone us all. Yet let me not blame the woman my soul doats on.—Pardon me, my amiable girl.—I am so deeply distressed

distressed with my sister's misfortunes, I hardly know what to write.—

About an hour since my servant awakened me, and begged I would make all expedition to Park-street, for Mrs. Montague was extremely ill, and no one knew where Mr. Montague was. I hurried on my cloaths, excessively alarmed, tho' the account was nothing to the real state in which I found her. I desired no body would disturb my father, who is not yet quite recovered from his late indisposition. With a fluttering heart I set out for Park-street. I found my dear Louisa just recovering from a fainting fit.—The sight of me plunged her into another. I cannot describe to you the agony I felt on seeing her in such a condition; nor will the description be necessary, as you know the extent of my affection for my sister, and know that she merits all I can feel. I eagerly inquired the occasion of her alarming situation. Nelson shewed me a letter, which had been brought her Lady by one of the men, who found it in Montague's library. It was written by him. What an infernal wretch he is!—I have

not had time to peruse the whole of it— but will now, as my poor Louisa seems rather more composed.—She has not opened her lips, either to vent a complaint, or to make any inquiries. She sits on a sofa, her head reclining on one hand, and her fixed eyes bent on the floor. I think it will be better not to disturb her from her profound *resverie*, lest we should again throw her into fainting fits.

I send you inclosed Montague's letter—No wonder the perusal of it had such cruel effects on my unhappy sister.—I would have transcribed it for you, lest Louisa should ask for it ; but the reading of it has so much affected me, that I have hardly left the power of seeing.

To Mrs. MONTAGUE.

THERE was a time when the task of writing to my still beloved Louisa was a task of pleasure.—Now it is my greatest curse—but it is the last. Oh my unfortunate wife ! what a villain have I been to thee ! I have deserted—left—abandoned—yet never ceased to love thee.

No,

No, tho' chained, enslaved by a cursed engagement, still I esteemed and honoured you. I make my sad confession to you, hopeless almost of forgiveness. Yet do I know the generous softness of your soul so well, as to believe you will extend your pardon to one, who sincerely hopes, 'ere you read this, he will be incapable of adding to his offences. Yes, my adorable Louisa, your husband—the man you honoured with your best affection,—will, in all probability, at the time this fatal paper meets your eyes, have atoned for the injuries he has done you, with his life. I go to vindicate and defend my crimes.—I meet Lord Hilton.—— Oh! Louisa! best of women! do not curse my memory. Pity me—for much do I stand in need of pity. I have long abhorred the engagement I was fatally drawn into.—I wished to extricate myself from the dangers I then foresaw would surround me.—But the fascination was too strong. You too, my lovely, injured wife!—you too contributed to my continuance in sin. Had I been able to discover that you were acquainted with my

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misfortune ; had you availed yourself of my melancholy, and pressed to know the cause—I should, I know I should, have been enabled to break the fatal spell. But let me not blame the most amiable of women.—No, rather let me search out some method of consolation for her wounded mind. Oh that I could pour any balm into the heart I have pierced with sorrow ! How shall I bid thee an eternal adieu ? How shall I recommend the accursed Montague to your memory ? My Louisa ! Oh ! still let me call thee mine ! How shall I part for ever from thee ?—And yet I must. Yes, thou best, thou worthiest of thy sex ! should fortune give me the advantage in the rencounter, we must meet no more. Some time since, if at thy feet I had fallen, and in deep heart-felt contrition owned my frailties, and you, from your blessed, God-like disposition, had deigned forgiveness, I would have risen with joy ; and the conscious innocence my sincere repentance would have created in my breast, would have diffused itself over my countenance. To have confessed my faults before you, would

would have been no more humiliating than at the throne of Heaven. But think not, now that I have yielded to meet the man I have injured, in defence of the woman who has so deeply wronged you, that I will ever appear in your presence. No, Louisa, I am not yet so cursed as even to wish it. If I survive,—which yet I hope I shall not,—I will remove myself far from my native land. Conclude me dead. To you and all the world I will be so.

My temporary affairs are all settled.— This sad task, the task of taking an eternal adieu of you, is the last. I have a son too.—Yes, my Louisa, we have a son!—Oh what becomes of me on that reflection!—He is born to curse his wretched father. Yet, in pity to the tenderness I once shewed you—and which, at the instant I am plunging a dagger in your breast, my heart runs over with,—conceal from him, if possible, the guilt of his parent. Oh! I adjure you.—Yet by what Power shall I adjure you?—By our past loves?—By our plighted vows?—They will only heap fresh cur-

ses on my devoted head. My vows are broken.-- My love yielded to a shameful, sinful passion.---By what then shall I adjure you not to disclose to our unfortunate child the fatal story of your husband?---By the matchless purity of thy own heart? Ah! it is only on thy goodness I can rely. Oh, my poor Louisa! I would intreat you not to hate my memory.---Yet, yet, I should wish it were in your power.---If such a wretch as I am have any influence, Oh! let me intreat you to be careful of your health. Preserve your life, for the sake of your offspring. And now I have done with this world. The last pang I feel,---and oh! if it exceeds those I already feel, how exquisite it must be!---will be for thee, my dearest, now injured wife, and my fatherless infant.

Adieu!---Hell can hardly have a torment greater than I at present endure---nor can heaven have joys sufficient to compensate the anguish I feel, when I say to you,---farewel for ever!

HENRY MONTAGUE.

To Miss HERBERT; in continuation.

I Told you in what a way I left the unhappy Louisa. When I had finished writing to my beloved Emily, I seated myself by my poor sister. I threw my arms round her, and, pressing my cheek to hers, gave way to a softness I could not suppress. She turned her unmoistened eyes on me with such a look—O Emily! I can never forget it. She spoke not a word. I wanted to rouse her from the stupor which seemed to invade her senses.—My efforts to speak to her caused a fresh stream of tears—I even sobbed. She then took up my handkerchief and fixed her eyes on it; it was wet. She pulled out her own, and put it to her eyes, and held it there some time, but, taking it away again, shook her head on not seeing any tears upon it; but still continued silent. In a low voice, I bid Nelson bring in the child. I hoped the sight of him might have some effect. I took the unfortunate little Harry in my arms, and presented it to the distressed mother.

Mechanically, I think, she folded him in her arms. The conscious infant smiled on the face of its mother, whose countenance was expressive of the most complicated woe. She bent over him as he lay on her knees, with her hands clasped in each other; in this affecting posture she continued some minutes; then lifting up her eyes, her hands still clasped in a kind of supplicating manner to Heaven, she exhibited the most piteous spectacle of woe I ever beheld. Her hands extended of themselves, and she fell back senseless on the sofa. Oh! how did I execrate the wretch who had involved her in such despair! Nelson caught the child, and we hastily applied every remedy to restore the afflicted Louisa to life. For a long time the obstinacy of her fit opposed our applications:—at last, however, she opened her dim eyes, and threw them around, as if in search of some one. I tenderly enquired what she sought. She made me no answer; but resumed the posture she had before been in. I pressed her to take some more drops; she made
no

no resistance. While I was sitting by her, and holding one of her hands in mine, her head reclined on my shoulder,—I heard a bustle below.—One of the servants exclaimed, “ Good God ! “ My master ! ” Louisa started from me, and flew to the door. Her motion was too quick for me to prevent her : I was too astonished to move at first ; however, I hurried after her, and found on the stairs-head her passage impeded by my father. He was tenderly expostulating with her. She endeavoured to pass him.—“ I know you, Sir,” cried she, “ you are my father—but, I fly to “ my husband.—No power shall restrain “ me.” She burst from his feeble grasp, and hastily ran down stairs. What an object met her sight ! Montague stretched bleeding, and to all appearance dead, on a bier ! She shrieked at the shocking spectacle. By this time, I had got into the hall, and strove to remove her from the body—She had taken one of the hands, “ Never, never shall “ ye remove me. He is mine.—This is “ all that Fate hath left me : never shall

"ye remove me." Her voice was uncommonly solemn. Her face white as ashes, and, in her eyes, a ghostly wildness, which thrilled through my soul. I gave orders for the body to be taken up stairs. I had no idea of there being any life. But the surgeons pronounced him to be only fainting from loss of blood. He was undressed, and laid in bed. His wounds being searched, the surgeons assured us they were mortal; but he might hold out some time. He shewed very little sense during the probing, not so much as to groan. Louisa had thrown herself on the floor by the bed-side. She lay stretched along like a corpse. Our utmost efforts were ineffectual to induce her to change her situation.

Poor Montague, after lying near an hour, uttered a deep and heavy sigh. Louisa started up, resting upon her hand, mute attention depicted in her face. Montague again sighed, and faintly murmured out, "Louisa!" Instantly she was on her knees at the bed-side. He put out his hand.—His eyes

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eyes glistening with tears, though with the seal of death on them. "Louisa!" he exclaimed once more. She pressed his hand between hers, and putting it to her lips.—"You said we should meet no more. We have met,—and now we will part no more." "Upbraid me not," cried he, "upbraid me not, my too kind Louisa.—Oh! that I had merited your tenderness!" His eyes ran over with tears. This sight melted her, and I was happy to see fast drops fall from her eyes. "Weep not for me," continued Montague, with great difficulty, "weep not for me thou angelic creature! Those tears which are shed for so unworthy an object, pierce me deeper than the sword of the enemy. Oh! that I had died on the field—rather than to be the accursed witness of the distress and anguish I occasion!" Her weeping relieved her head.—Reason returned—and though she seemed fully sensible of her deep affliction, she yet bore it better. "Good God!" cried she, "what am I doing?" Then raising herself, she rested on the bed, and laid her face close

to his. Poor dear creature! she became sensible of the impropriety of his being constrained to speak loud enough for her to hear him, in the place she had taken before. What their conversation now was, I know not, as they both spoke exceeding low.

Oh! my dearest Emily! are these the subjects with which I must entertain my beloved? What melancholy lines am I constrained to pen! Yet I do not, in pity to your gentle bosom, give the full painting to the dreadful scene which presents itself to my view. Oh! had you seen my aged father tearing his venerable white hairs—his heart bursting with anguish for the distresses of his beloved, unhappy daughter—that daughter almost deprived of reason—But, why do I harrow up my soul with the sad reflection?—Why give additional sorrow to the breast of my beloved? Oh! Emily, when can we hope to see an end to these misfortunes?—Alas! I fear my poor sister will never be rightly herself again.—Did she vent herself

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herself in loud complaints, I might entertain some faint hopes. But such settled gloomy despair possesses her features, as breaks down every barrier airy hope builds up, and leaves me--from the apprehension of the fatal consequences,--the most unhappy of men. Adieu! my amiable Emily! May my next letter convey more consolation to you!

Yours faithfully,

CHARLES SOMERVILLE.

LETTER LXXIII.

To Miss HERBERT.

June 6th.

MY unhappy sister vainly flatters herself Montague will recover. But every thing is against him. We are all convinced he can hold out but a few hours longer, yet dare not check the hopes which his sad wife entertains--hopes, which must end in keen disappointment.

Yesterday she entered the room where my father was sitting indulging the sor-

row

row which almost overwhelms his age:—

“Come, Sir,” cried she, holding out her hand, “permit me to lead you to my Montague.—He is mine *only* now. He only wants your pardon to be quite well. You will not refuse your daughter’s husband forgiveness.” Her manner and looks discovered the disordered state of her poor head. My father burst into tears.—“Urge me not;” answered he, sobbing, “I cannot go. My forgiveness cannot be necessary:—” “And if it were—could I grant it to him, whose cruelty had reduced you my beloved daughter, to such an affecting situation?”

“See!” cried she, throwing herself at his feet, “see whether his cruelty, as you call it, affects me as strongly as the cruel denial of my father. These are tears—My tears, which bedew your hand! The cruelty of Montague my beloved husband drew not a tear from my eyes—No; it is only the want of affection in a father, that can have such an effect on me.”

“Oh!”

“Oh! rise, rise, my child—and I will
“attend thee wherever thou wishest.”

The agitation into which my father's visit threw poor Montague, has been of singular disservice to him—though before there were no hopes at all.

His contrition seems so deep, that were life to be lent him a little longer, I dare believe he would make every atonement for his failures.—My dear sister would then be happy; but I much fear he will very soon die—and then I extremely doubt, if she should survive him, that her head will never be right. Ah! what an affliction has his deviation from virtue brought on us all! What a lesson does the misfortune of our family convey to the gay and unthinking!

Mr. Lenox is just arrived to take the final farewell of his friend. When he was announced, Louisa hastened to him. He was unable to speak. She took his hand, and in a broken voice thanked him for coming to the house of mourning. But presently resuming her hopes, she bid him look for happier prospects.

The

The meeting between the friends was solemnly affecting—I could not stand it. Is it not astonishing, that Louisa with her nicer feelings could support the awful scene so well? Alas! my Emily! I fear it is owing to the disorder of her head.

From the account my sister had given Mr. Lenox, he flattered himself he should find his friend better; but the appearance the almost dying Montague made,—soon, too soon contradicted her favourable sentiments of him.

Mr. Lenox was extremely shocked—and politely blamed us for encouraging Mrs. Montague's hopes. We assured him we were as far from encouraging her hopes, as we were for entertaining any ourselves:—yet we know not how to awaken her from the pleasing delirium into which she had sunk, as he must have observed the very extraordinary effect her distress had had on her intellects. He knew not what to say—but fears with us that she will be less able to bear the shock of her husband's dissolu-

tion—

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tion—(which must shortly happen) from the delusive hopes she has formed.

June 7th.

Ah! My God! It is all over! His death happened when we least expected it. He seemed better.—Unhappy man! May thy sincere penitence meet acceptance! But the poor Louisa! Oh! my dear Emily! What shall I say of her?

It proved as we predicted.—She was not prepared for the shock. He died in her arms. His last breath escaped him in a blessing for her. We have just recovered her from a fit.

Nine o'clock.

She will not believe he is dead. She will go and see him. Would to Heaven we could bend her from her purpose! I am dreadfully apprehensive of the consequences. Yet all our persuasions have not the least effect on her once gentle disposition. She seems totally altered, my dear Emily. Her grief has changed her utterly.

The

June 8.

The attempt to see the lifeless corse has been made, but yet unaccomplished. The unhappy Louisa fell into strong agonies on approaching the door. A premature labour is brought on by her fatal afflictions. Must the dear angel be so much a sufferer both in mind and body? How hard! how very hard her fate!

* * *

Seven o'Clock.

We find Lord Hilton has fled to France. We do not know as yet how to proceed. Lady Bentick thinks no step should be taken till my poor sister is able to be consulted.—Mr. Bentick is so good as to manage all our concerns at present, knowing our inabilities. He learns that Lady Hilton has retired somewhere, in a state of distraction. Well may she feel the sharpest pangs! deservedly does she feel them! But for her, how happy had we all been; and now, my Emily, how cruel a reverse appears!

Now,

* * *

Eleven at Night.

Now, now, my Emily! does all my philosophy, all my fortitude leave me! My sister! my Louisa!—Ah! can I pierce your gentle bosom with the cruel truth?—And yet who could in so tender a manner give the wound?—Oh! my Emily! she is—she is dying. This is a stroke too, too severe! Her senses are returned—but soon they will be lost for ever. Yes, I am doomed to lose the best, the kindest, most loved of sisters.

What a task is mine! Heart-broken, and bending under the severest weight of woe, I must yet hold out my hand to support and comfort my unhappy father. Oh! she is his darling. How can he resign her! How relinquish his long, long-indulged hopes, that she would cheer his evening of life, and smooth his dying pillow! Now must that respectable life be shortened by the untimely death of my lovely sister! Cut off in her early bloom by the destroying hand of grief! Oh! it is too much to bear without repining. Heaven is too severe.

Yes,

Yes, Emily! thou beloved of my heart, thou wilt never again behold thy friend! Never again listen to her soft melodious voice, and hear the genuine sentiments of her angelic heart flowing in the language of reason. That heart, which delighted but in giving pleasure to all the world, is now broken with anguish and sorrow!—I cannot go on. Oh! Emily! the brother—the friend is too powerful!

At the request of the dying faint we have been assembled round her bed. Ah! the awful scene will never be absent from my eyes! How pathetic were her words! Who can express the effect her dying looks and faltering accents had on each of her sad auditors? She meant to take a solemn leave of all, but the agonies her intentions excited in us prevented her. She suffers but for us. “Oh! my friends,” cried she, “how ungrateful must I appear in your eyes, for desiring to quit life, when I behold the grief my loss will occasion.”

“Yet

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“ Yet I wish to convince you, that to
“ be at peace I must seek the grave.
“ But do not think—that were Heaven
“ pleased to punish me with long life,
“ I would do the least thing to endan-
“ ger or shorten it :—no—I would bear
“ its sharp decrees with as much firm-
“ ness and resignation as possible.

“ But though my heart might have
“ resisted the cruel stroke it had receiv-
“ ed, my head—my head—you are all
“ sensible—was too weak to bear the
“ shock. Heaven, in pity to me has
“ now restored the full use of my intel-
“ lects—but perhaps my life is the
“ price I pay for that enjoyment. Yet
“ it would have been an aggravation of
“ your sorrow—Ah! how much greater
“ than seeing me dead—had you beheld
“ me for ever deprived of reason! I
“ see, I see the anguish my discourse—
“ and what it leads to—gives you.
“ Oh! my father! my brother! my
“ friends! though rejoicing in the pro-
“ spect of soon rejoining my beloved
“ husband, these tears, these tears are for
“ you.”

Judge, Emily, by your own, what our hearts must feel. My father! unhappy, wretched father cast himself on his knees by the bed-side. His aged hands were lifted up, and the tears of deep anguish rolled down his furrowed cheeks. His sobs were so audible as to disturb his dying daughter.—She made an effort to rise, and reached out her hand. She likewise strove to speak, but the distress of her parent prevented her.—She wept, and by her looks lamented the grief she herself involuntarily occasioned. We were obliged to convey my poor father away. On my knees I besought him to restrain his afflictions; and gave him counsel I could not follow myself. He clasped me in his arms, and held me as if I was the only one left in the world, for whom he interested himself. Oh! these relations are too affecting. And yet the reciting these events as they pass is the only relief I can feel.

Once more I attend my sister.—Emily! in a few hours, and I have no sister! Oh! God! teach me to bear, teach me

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to speak consolation to my wretched parent!

June 9, ten o'Clock.

She is gone! Yes, Emily! you have lost your Louisa! What my loss is words cannot express, nor can the heart with all its reason support.—I find the violence of the affliction deeper from the struggles I make to restrain it. It must—it must have way.—I cannot resist it.

Four o'Clock.

I must return to my pen. Ah! how silent we all are!—Every one retired to indulge that woe, which gathers strength from communication.

At seven this morning, the dear departed angel reached out her hand to me. “Charles,” said she in a feeble voice, “my dear Charles! I have a request to make you. Next to my Montague, his honour is dear to me. I cannot bear that his reputation should be mangled by seeking to avenge his death. Let all our misfortunes end here. Nor do not acquaint my beloved little infant, when he arrives at years
“ of

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“ of maturity, with more of the unhappy
 “ occasion, which at once deprives him
 “ of both his parents, than may serve
 “ to make him love virtue: but beware,
 “ I conjure you, of making his father’s
 “ memory disrespected by him. Let
 “ him be taught to love and pity us.
 “ Be you, my beloved brother, and my
 “ dear amiable Emily, his parents.
 “ Bring him up as your own. And oh!
 “ may Heaven teach him to love you
 “ both, as his mother has ever done!”

“ Love my Emily for my sake. And
 “ tell her I beg of her, in return for
 “ the unequalled affection I have ever
 “ bore her, that she will be a daughter
 “ to my poor father—That she will never
 “ let him miss his Louisa—but cheer
 “ his drooping years.”

Much more she added—but I was incapable of attending from the excess of my distress. She spoke to us all for near half an hour before her soul took its flight—though with frequent interruptions, for want of strength her adieus were solemnly affecting. Her recommendations of her father and child were
 made

made in such terms, as would break your heart with grief, were it in my power to repeat them.

Next Thursday the silent tomb will receive the unfortunate pair. Thursday ! that day, which used to be distinguished by festivity and joy, will now be ever marked in our village by dampening sorrow. That day which gave my Louisa as a blessing to mankind, will behold her for ever wrested from the world. On that day, uncommon joy was to have reigned : On that day a more than common grief will take place. How will our village youth and maids deplore the kind guardian of their happiness ! Clouded are those brows which used to look up to her with grateful smiles ! Instead of roundelays and rustic mirth, the solemn bell will announce to all, our heavy loss ; and mournful dirges take place of the marriage-song. The selected pairs, which were to have been united on that day, will mournfully follow to the grave that departed angel, whom living they would have attended to church.

Oh! my Emily! and must the torch we meant to light be dimmed with tears? Thus must our union be solemnized? But partners in love, we must likewise be so in affliction. Yes, Emily! we will weep together.—Together deplore our mutual loss; and together strive to fulfil the dying requests of our angelic sister. Heaven grant consolation to my father! Enough of misfortune has already overtaken us. Merciful God! how hard—But in vain do we repine. Emily! we must submit. Adieu! If possible, be comforted!

Your's only,

CHARLES SOMERVILLE.

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